

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Now, food safety officials warn of adulterated jaggery

TNN | Dec 1, 2019

Madurai: Jaggery, which is considered a healthier alternative to sugar, may not be safe if the quality is poor as many people are shifting to jaggery due to its health benefits. Food safety officials from the district have urged people to be wary of jaggery having golden yellow, kesari or other bright colours as they could be adulterated with sugar and chemical substances. Traders chose substandard Jaggery varieties to increase profit and attract customers, officials said. District designated officer for food safety Dr M Somasundaram said that traders are responsible for selling substandard Jaggery. "Although farmers manufacture jaggery by putting a unit in their sugarcane fields, it is the traders who provide specifications on how the Jaggery has to be prepared. They also pay in advance to get the products in desired standards," he said.

"Jaggery is manufactured by boiling juice extracted from sugarcane. It is a powerhouse of essential minerals like iron, zinc and chromium. Adulterating Jaggery with sugar, artificial colours and excessive chemicals for bleaching not only takes away the good qualities, but also pose a health hazard," said food safety officials.

"Jaggery is sold in various colours from golden yellow to kesari. Authentic Jaggery is dark in colour. Traders stock substandard Jaggery as they cannot make much profit in selling authentic Jaggery, which costs more," Dr Somasundaram said.

Health officials said that the chemicals used to bleach Jaggery are harmful for health, but they are available in surplus Madurai shops and are sold openly. "We will crack the whip against shops selling adulterated Jaggery," a food safety official said.

Another food safety official added, "Traders often blame farmers for poor manufacturing units and producing sub-standard quality of Jaggery. But in reality, it is the traders who encourage farmers to produce sub-standard Jaggery."

Food safety officials say that traders are now trying to make adulterated Jaggery legal by approaching food safety and standards authority of India to include sugar added Jaggery as a separate product.