

[IMAGE]

Seeing Red

By Editorial Staff

As in red food dye, which may increase the risk of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). Considering how many things we eat contain red food dye these days, it's high time for a lesson in why avoiding it should be your #1 priority. Let's look at new research linking the dye with IBD to make our case.

Here are just some of the ways the average person can be exposed to red food dye multiple times on a daily basis: sodas and other soft drinks, condiments, puddings, dairy products (ice cream, sherbet, etc.), processed baked goods, candy and fruit juices. In other words, most of the things millions of Americans consume habitually. Any time you notice a particular food has a red hue (that's not accounted for by natural ingredients, such as strawberries; or added for color, such as beet juice / powder), red food dye is the likely culprit.

Now to one of the potential health problems, which we alluded to earlier: According to new research, red food dye increases the risk of suffering inflammatory bowel disease, which includes such conditions as ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. IBD is an immune disorder that affects up to 1.6 Americans, most before the age of 35. That means the immune system attacks healthy tissues, causing symptoms including abdominal pain, diarrhea, rectal bleeding, weight loss, fever and anemia. If that isn't bad enough, IBD can cause intestinal damage over time, such as abscesses, fistulas and even an increased risk of colon cancer.

The new study findings, which appear in *Nature Communications*, suggest chronic exposure to red food dye in the diet increases IBD risk. While the study authors used an animal (mouse) model to test their hypothesis, they emphasize: "Humans are exposed to various chemical substances everyday through diet. Western diets are especially rich in synthetic colorants that enhance the appearance of foods to attract consumers, particularly children."

In other words, while human studies are pending, you probably don't want to wait before assessing your red food dye exposure and doing whatever you can to reduce the impact it can have on your / your family's health. Start by checking the ingredient labels of your favorite foods. If you see red food dye (commonly listed as Allura Red, FD&C Red 40 or Food Red 17), you've found the potential problem ... and become a

more aware consumer in the process.

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