Food regulator tells states to crack down on use of contaminated ice blocks

Dated: 28 April 2017

The current FSSAI guidelines on ice quality only concern the edible kind, and there are no standards set for ice that come into contact with food products.

Consuming contaminated ice cubes is as bad for health as drinking impure water, and can lead to many waterborne illnesses.

Taking this into consideration, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) – the country’s top food regulator – issued a directive mandating state governments to crack down on people found using ice blocks made of impure water for preserving, storing and transporting perishable food items.

“Yes, we have issued a circular that mandates states to crack down on the use of bad quality ice slabs to preserve food items, including meat, poultry, fish and dairy products. It is as harmful for one’s health to have ice made of contaminated water as it is to have contaminated water directly,” said an FSSAI official on the condition of anonymity.

“It has been observed that ice blocks used for preservation/ storage/ transportation of perishable food commodities are often made from non-potable water and handled un-hygienically, which leads to the contamination of the food commodity stored/preserved/transported in such ice…” the FSSAI order read.
The current FSSAI guidelines on ice quality only concern the edible kind, and there are no standards set for ice that come into contact with food products.

“It has been decided that any ice/ice blocks used for preserving/storing/transporting food products or coming in contact with food products shall conform to the microbiological requirements prescribed for edible ice…” the order further read.

Dr Mukesh Mehra, associate director for internal medicine at Max Hospital in Patparganj, said this order was particularly significant because the country witnesses an increase in waterborne infections during the summer. “This is because people tend to drink water and juice with doubtful ice quality from vendors sitting in the open,” he added.

So, what are the symptoms you should look out for if you come down with a waterborne disease? If you have high fever with diarrhoea, it may be typhoid.

The symptoms for jaundice are varied. If you suffer from fatigue, nausea and vomiting, and your skin and eyes are yellowed, there’s a good chance that you have this disease. Also check if the colour of your urine has become yellow or reddish.