

The controversy around Nestle's Maggi noodles has caused panic throughout the nation and it doesn't look like it will die down any time soon.

After the initial test results by Uttar Pradesh Department of Food and Drug Administration (FDA) showed harmful levels of monosodium glutamate (MSG) and lead in Maggi, various states across India and even Bangladesh conducted tests on Maggi to find out whether the food product is safe or not.



The controversy around Maggi has led to tests being conducted across the country.

The entire controversy began when the UP FDA last month asked Nestle India to withdraw a batch of Maggi noodles "which were manufactured in February 2014" after it found high levels of added MSG, a taste enhancer, in the noodles and lead beyond permissible limits.

"What the company had claimed about the absence of MSG in Maggi has found to be incorrect in the test," Barbanki District Food Officer VK Pandey had said.

On lead content, he had said, "it has been established in the report that it is beyond the tolerance level of 2.5 parts per million (ppm). It is 17.2 ppm."

However, Nestle India said that on 30 April, 2015, local authorities in Lucknow asked it to recall one batch of Maggi Noodles, around two lakh packs, "which were manufactured in February 2014 and had already reached the 'Best Before date' in November 2014."

Sources also told CNN-IBN that the UP test results could be true only for the 2014 batch of Maggi and not all its batches.

What do test results say so far?

Test results in Delhi on Tuesday declared Maggi unsafe for consumption. According to officials, a total of 13 samples of masala (tastemaker) were lifted by authorities from various areas of the city last week out of which 10 samples were found unsafe having lead exceeding the prescribed limits.

Five samples of masala were also having monosodium glutamate without proper label declaration which is an offence under the category of misbranding, they said.

The samples were lifted by the Food Safety Officers of the Health department after receiving a communication from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

Following the test results from Delhi, the Delhi government decided to initiate a case against Nestle India.

State-run retail outlets in Kerala were ordered to withdraw these products after the Delhi test results.

On the other hand, Maharashtra FDA had not found any harmful levels of lead in Maggi after initial testing on Monday, sources told IBNLive. But Maharashtra FDA sought re-verification of test results from labs in Pune and the final results are expected to come out on Wednesday.

Like the initial test results from Maharashtra, the Karnataka FDA had also initially concluded on Monday that Maggi was not unsafe. However, it asked for re-verification of that result from its Bengaluru labs.

After the Delhi test results on Tuesday, the Karnataka government ordered random lifting of samples of Maggi noodles from across the state for laboratory testing.

Goa had also declared that Maggi is safe for eating. Goa FDA said that Maggi in the state is safe for human consumption as the lead and monosodium glutamate in the products had been found within permissible limit.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute (BSTI) found no harmful ingredients in five brands of noodles, including Maggi. "We have tested the noodles of five companies, including Maggi, and didn't find any harmful ingredients," BSTI's certification wing director KP Das told Tehelka.

Swiss multinational giant Nestle sells 5.2 billion Maggi noodle packs across the world in 130 countries every year, according to Indian Express.

Other states in India which have begun testing of Maggi samples but have not come out with results so far are West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

How are lead and MSG harmful?

Scientists say that lead in manufactured food products may come from the raw materials, including water, flavouring material, packaging or the curling agent, according to Indian Express.

Even though the permissible limit of lead in manufactured food products is 2.5 ppm, The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said that there is no known level of lead that is considered safe, according to The Telegraph.

"Lead is a cumulative toxic metal that can affect multiple body systems, including the brain, nervous system and kidneys, and is particularly harmful to young children, according to a WHO document," said the report.

MSG is used in manufactured food to make it tastier as it stimulates the nervous system, according to Indian Express. It is commonly used in 'Indian Chinese' food and glutamate is present in many natural foods like tomato, mushroom, fungi and cheese.

The Telegraph report added that the US FDA has concluded that MSG is "generally recognised as safe", although a Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology report says that three grams or more of MSG without food could cause mild symptoms like headache, numbness, flushing, palpitations and drowsiness.

(With inputs from PTI)