



July 08, 2013

Rajendra Pratap Gupta
President

Chairman
Hindustan Unilever / Colgate Palmolive / The Himalaya Drug Co. / GlaxoSmithKline
Mumbai.

Ref: Failure to display properly important information related to potentially poisonous effects of toothpastes / tooth powder on children

I am writing this note on behalf of 'The Disease Management Association of India – The Population Health Improvement Alliance'.

We have come across a glaring lapse in the manner in which the important information related to the quantity of toothpaste / toothpowder to be used by children is not displayed by your company. The correct quantity should be used and the over usage could be detrimental to the health of the population has not been properly displayed on the packaging. This is a serious issue and cause of immediate concern in the interest of millions of children across the country. I am putting here the message displayed on most of the toothpastes/toothpowders sold in India. It is important to quote here that majority of the toothpastes / powders sold are have fluoride as an ingredient.

- 'For children under the age of six; use a pea sized amount under adult supervision. Do not swallow. (Printed on Pepsodent made by HUL).
- Keep out of reach of children under 6 years of age. If you accidentally swallow more than used for brushing, get medical help or contact poison control. Children under 2 years ask a dentist or physicians (Printed on Aquafresh made by GSK. Of course, I brought this particular pack from U.K. but I guess it would be same for India as well).
- Children under 6 years of age should have adult supervision and use only a pea size amount. Do not swallow (Printed on Colgate made by Colgate-Palmolive).
- Children 6 years and below should have adult supervision and use only a pea-sized amount. Do not swallow. Spit and rinse thoroughly after brushing (Printed on Active Fresh Gel by Himalaya Drug Co.)

It is evident that brushing of teeth daily twice is a message blasted on various media platforms i.e. TV, Radio & magazines every day, but the message (using the right quantity & the potential poisonous effects on the health of children if used more than the size of a pea), which should ideally be put as a warning in bold & red colored alphabets or read out aloud in the TV / Radio is completely ignored in these media blasts.

Disease Management Association of India

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Also, the message to use 'pea size' is put in small alphabets and that too, in English only, It is important to consider, how many Indians would understand 'size of pea' keeping in mind the rural & non-English speaking population? This is a serious issue, and I am quite surprised that this has not been raised till date by anyone, and this would have already harmed millions of children across the country.

This amounts to a serious ethical lapse on your company's part, and conveys lack of seriousness towards the health of the country's innocent children who are coerced into using tooth paste daily without understanding the harmful effects based on the numerous advertisements blasted on various media platforms.

I also must quote the annual report of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India; *"Excess intake of fluoride over a long period of time leads to major health disorders like Dental Fluorosis, Skeletal Fluorosis and Non-Skeletal Fluorosis besides inducing ageing. The harmful effects being permanent and irreversible in nature are detrimental to the health of an individual and the community which in turn has an impact on growth development economy and human resources development of the country"* and the Government has started a national programme for prevention and control of Fluorosis (NPPF).

Clearly, business interests of your company have ignored the health issues related to children of this country and this has to be addressed without any further delay.

I would like to hear from you about the action taken in this regard in terms of;

1. Immediate warnings to be issued on radio, newspapers and television about the quantity of tooth paste to be used by children and harmful / poisonous side effects.
2. Mentioning this warning prominently and highlighting it in local language in red color on the packing and the toothpaste tube.
3. Withdrawing the old stocks from the market and replacing them with the new stocks with proper warning.

I am also marking this note to Shri Keshav Desiraju, Secretary- Health, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, for actions that might be needed on an urgent basis & how medical associations like IMA (Indian Medical Association) & IDA (Indian Dental Association) have been endorsing some of these brands might need to be looked into.

In hope of the needful at the earliest possible.

Yours Sincerely

Shri. Desiraju, Secretary to the Government of India, MOHFW.

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