

**The Need for Change in America's Food:**  
**Eliminating Red Dye Forty**

Anonymous

Anoka Ramsey Community College

ENGL 1121/1120: College Writing and Critical Reading

Professor Chris McCarthy

April 4, 2024

## **The Need for Change in America's Food: Eliminating Red Dye Forty**

Have you ever thought about that one snack you really enjoy that may not be the healthiest option for you? Maybe it's a sweet treat like Gushers, Fruit Loops, or even Pop tarts. Unfortunately, a lot of those good, yummy foods have a food coloring dye called red forty. Red forty is a strong pigment red dye put in many foods to make them look more appealing and exciting to eat, but studies have found it is not healthy to consume. Researcher Watson (2019) discusses the real name behind red forty is Allura Red dye that is created from petroleum distillates or coal tars. Nestle (2011) states that the FDA makes decisions on science not beliefs. Yet, red forty needs to be banned in America due to studies showing it causes hyperactivity in children, health risks, and allergies surrounding this food dye. Weir (2023) found red forty has been banned in the United Kingdom, France, Norway, Finland and many other portions of the European countries but not America yet. The risks of red forty are overwhelming. We want the future generations health to improve and our health now as well. We can improve our health by using natural red dyes from fruits and vegetables instead of harsh chemicals. If this does not get banned by the FDA it could make these problems red dye forty is causing spike in future generations.

For our future generations red forty should be banned before the risks rise with consuming the dye. We should not have to wait for science to prove it instead listen to the problems red forty is causing in people's bodies today. Due to the FDA not banning red forty because they need the science not beliefs. Researchers found that when some kids consume red forty it causes hyperactivity, such as not being able to stay still, hard time staying on task, excessive talking, easily frustrated, and fidgeting. A study by Madormo (2023) explains that

there could be a link to consuming red dye forty and a cause to ADHD which stands for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. As well as consuming it can amplify their ADHD symptoms.

Think about the amount of kid snacks like fruit snacks, strawberry apple sauce, and even juices kids pack in their lunch for school every day. Many children consume red dye without even knowing it. Getting rid of red forty this could help eliminate or help the problem of young children getting diagnosed with ADHD. CDC (2023) did research on children 3-17 years old. Latest research shows six million have reported diagnosed with ADHD throughout the years. This shows how prevalent this disorder is in America and the number of ADHD diagnosis need to be reduced. Due to the research of red forty in our foods being a lead cause to this disorder there's a link in Americas food that is making the diagnosis of kids getting ADHD spike. Kids dealing with ADHD can affect them in the future but by banning one of the leading causes this number can decrease in children in America.

With evidence of red forty showing that there could be a link to ADHD, why has it not been banned yet? Madormo (2023) states that red forty is one of the most popular food dyes used in America due to the appealing look it gives candies, drinks, and snacks. Making the foods look more appealing help consumers make better sales. She also states that it is in a lot of our cereals, drinks, dairy products, candy, and gelatin. A lot of these foods people consume every day with red forty, which makes it hard to not consume it. Writer who is specialized in health science and environment from the Washington Post Cimons (2023) talks about some of the health risks of red forty causing inflammatory bowel disease like Crohn's disease. Cimons (2023) also points out how they tested the dye on animals noticing cancer so in cosmetics it has been removed. That was not enough to show the FDA we should not ingest it.

Allergies are an autoimmune response where your immune system attacks something harmless to most people that it cannot break down. My sister, when she was young, had a red velvet cupcake at a birthday party for the first time. Immediately, she started to feel sick and puked it all out almost seconds after she consumed it. When she is about to eat something that may have red dye forty, she must read the labels to find if it contains that dye. A registered dietitian who specializes in pediatric nutrition Mittler (2022) found that in Europe packages must state that red dye forty is in the foods on the label due to allergies and sensitivities to the dye. Red forty should be put on all US product labels just like the other top ten allergens. Putting red forty on labels will help people recognize how many foods have red dye forty in them. This would eliminate a lot of sales in these products that contain red forty and hope that it would eventually get removed from all products. This could help people with allergies to red forty find the dye faster to make sure it's safe for them to consume.

The health risks of red dye forty can go on and on but they have found research that it can be a leading cause for migraines. Mayo (2023) states that migraines consist of severe pain in the head, throbbing, light sensitivity, dizziness, and vomiting. Majority of migraines are severe chronic pain that can take a while to cure. Researcher Mittler (2022) explains that red forty is a trigger to those people who deal with migraines. There are a lot more chemicals like acids in these dyes that trigger some of these health risks. People that are prone to migraines most likely need to stay away from candies and snacks like red jellybeans, licorice, or even certain fountain drinks that contain higher amounts of Red Dye forty in them. A lot more products have red forty in them, and many people do not even recognize it. Red dye can be certain dairy products like strawberry milk. A lot of foods that may look organic and made with no artificial food coloring often do have food dyes like red forty.

Instead of using harsh chemicals to create a bright colorful red, we should focus on getting those colors naturally in an organic way. In an article “Make Your Own Natural Food Dye for Valentine’s Treat’s” Shreeves (2021) discusses how you can use natural foods like beet powder to make those fun pink and red colors. Due to my sister not being able to have red dye forty, my mom makes the red food coloring in baking natural. We use raspberry’s and crush them to make a red food coloring for frosting. Robison (2022) tells us you can also use, cherries, cranberries, pomegranate, strawberries, and many more. She also talks about the nutrients you can get from these natural foods like beets. She discusses beets have a lot of good vitamins such as calcium, magnesium, iron, zinc, and a lot more. Substituting red dye forty to natural foods creating red coloring would improve health by getting nutrients while eating that sweet treat or beverage. This would help our younger generations treats and snack improve and give them those yummy snacks with food coloring knowing it is all natural and not filled with Allura Red.

Believing science can only get you so far but believing the signs and experiences of people consuming red dye forty products is what we need to be focusing on. Products like gummy bears, chips, cereals and fruit juices contain red dye forty. Not banning red dye forty can cause these health risks to rise in our country. We should not have to worry about what kind of health risks our food might cause us in the future. California has jumped on the train to ban red forty and take matters in their own hands. A writer in the food and drug administration for The New York Times Jewett (2023) tells us that California is the first state to sign a law that red dye forty will be banned and increasing reassurance on the FDA to examine the dye. For our future generations and generations now, we need to decrease amount of health issues in America and banning red forty can be a big part in helping our health long term. Using substitute like cherry’s, beats, strawberries and much more is a great alternative. Next time you’re eating, look at your

label and see if you are consuming this dye. Think twice to make sure you still really want it.

Choose a healthier option or even try making something with natural red food coloring.

## References

CDC. (2023, October 16.) Data and Statistics About ADHD. *CDC*.

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/data.html>

Cimons, M. (2023, February 7.) Is red dye use in food products a health hazard?

*The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/2023/02/07/red-dye-food-health/>

Jewett, C. (2023, October 14.) California's Ban on Red Food Dye Puts F.D. A's Food Policies on

the Spot. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/14/health/california-ban-red-dye-food.html>

Madormo, C. (2023, October 11.) Red Dye 40 and ADHD: What's the Link? *Very Well Health*. <https://www.verywellhealth.com/red-dye-40-adhd-5220957>.

Mayo Clinic Staff, (2023, July 7.) Migraines. *Mayo Clinic*. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/migraine-headache/symptoms-causes/syc-20360201>

Mittler, M (2022, September 3.) Can Red Dye Cause Allergies or Behavior Problems? *Very Well Health*. <https://www.verywellhealth.com/red-and-yellow-may-be-the-cause-3956894>

Nestle, M. (2011, October 3.) Why The FDA Doesn't Ban Food Colors, BPA and other chemicals. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2011/10/why-the-fda-doesnt-ban-food-colors-bpa-and-other-chemicals/246011/>

Robison, S. (2022 November 12.) (Best Red Food Coloring Substitutes. *TastingTable*.

<https://www.tastingtable.com/1095976/red-food-coloring-substitutes/>

Shreeves, R. (2021, February 8.) Make Your Own Natural Red Food Dye for Valentine's Treats. *Treehugger*. <https://www.treehugger.com/make-your-own-natural-red-food-dye-for-valentines-treats4868297#:~:text=Livestrong%20suggests%20using%20beet%20powder,unwanted%20liquid%20to%20the%20food.>

Watson, S. (2019, October 25.) Understanding Food Dye Allergies.

*Healthline*. <https://www.healthline.com/health/allergies/understanding-food-dye-allergies#common-allergies>

Weir, G. (2023, February 6.) 12 American foods that are banned around the world.

*Honey*. Kitchen.nine.com.au.