Identifying Foods that Contain Synthetic Food Dyes

- Foods certified as "organic" by the USDA are free from food colors (but those foods with labels that say "made with organic ingredients" may or may not have food colors in them).

- Most unprocessed foods do not contain food colors.

- For non-organic foods, read food ingredients labels to look for specific synthetic food dyes. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) specifies that foods containing synthetic dyes must list them by name in the ingredients list. Only three synthetic food dyes make up about 90% of all FD&C dyes used in the U.S. They are: Red 40, Yellow 5 and Yellow 6.

- The terms "artificial color," "artificial color added" and "color added" indicate that nature-derived pigments were used instead of one of the FDA-approved synthetic food dyes. There are many of these pigments.

FDA-approved synthetic food dyes and where they are used:

Red 40 – Found in beverages, breakfast cereals, baked goods, flavored yogurts, chips, gelatin, dessert powders, candy, other foods, cosmetics, medicines.

Yellow 5 – Found in soft drinks, other beverages, baked goods, breakfast cereals, processed vegetables, chips, pickles, honey, mustard, gelatin desserts, pudding, ready to use frostings, dessert powders, candy, other foods, gum, cosmetics, medicines.

Yellow 6 – Found in breakfast cereals, sausages, baked goods, chips, orange soda, other beverages, hot chocolate mix, ready to use frostings, dessert powders, candy, gelatin desserts, other foods, cosmetics, medicines.

Blue 1 – Found in baked goods, ice cream, canned peas, jellies, candy, beverages, dessert powders, condiments, other foods, mouthwash, medicines.

Red 3 – Found in sausage casings, cake decorations, baked goods, canned fruits, maraschino cherries, candy, popsicles, other foods, medicines.

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Blue 2 – Found in breakfast cereals, beverages, ice cream, candy, other foods, medicines.

Green 3 – Found in canned peas, other processed vegetables, fish, beverages, pudding, dessert powders, ice cream, sherbets, sorbet, cotton candy, other candy, other foods, medicines, personal care products, cosmetics.

Red 2 – Found only in the peels of some oranges.

Orange B: Found only in some hot dog and sausage casings.

FD&C Lakes: Formed by chemically reacting one of the above synthetic food dyes with another substance (for example, Blue 1 Lake); found in various foods and other products.

Additional resources:

Overview of Food Ingredients, Additives & Colors, at *http://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/FoodAdditivesIngredients/ucm094211.htm*

Exposure Estimate for FD&C Colors for the U.S. Population, at *http://www.fda.gov/AdvisoryCommittees/CommitteesMeetingMaterials/FoodAdvisoryCommittee/ucm411920.htm*

Color Additives: FDA's Regulatory Process and Historical Perspectives, at *http://www.fda.gov/ForIndustry/ColorAdditives/RegulatoryProcessHistoricalPerspectives/default.htm*

Summary of Color Additives for Use in the United States in Foods, Drugs, Cosmetics, and Medical Devices, at *http://www.fda.gov/ForIndustry/ColorAdditives/ColorAdditiveInventories/ucm115641.htm#table1A*

Written by Mary Meck Higgins, Ph.D., R.D., L.D., FAND (Fellow of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics); Associate Professor and K-State Research & Extension Specialist; Kansas State University, Department of Human Nutrition. Mailing address: 207 Justin Hall—HN, 1324 Lovers Lane, Manhattan KS 66506-1407. Email: *mhiggins@ksu.edu*

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