

## Formalin in Nestle Pakistan milk

Nestlé has lion's share in packaged (Ultra High Temperature) UHT milk and bottled water industries of Pakistan. Pakistanis have traditionally been buying open milk from local vendors and consuming it after pasteurizing it at home. Nestle in early 1980s got into the country and developed a market for packaged UHT milk. There are now many packaged UHT milk brands in the country competing with each other though Nestle brands enjoy the advantages of being the pioneer.

Nestlé claims that it markets pure milk, aseptically packaged in the perfect hygienic conditions. The company buys milk from the local farmers at dirt cheap prices and in its advertisement campaigns ridicules and degrades the traditional milk distribution system of the country. It has invested millions in its aggressive media ventures for convincing common consumers to stop buying milk from traditional chains on the grounds that it is unhygienic and unfit for human consumption.

TheNetwork for Consumer Protection in Pakistan decided to put their claim to test. We carefully collected samples of all the brands and got these tested in a distinguished and reputed government laboratory, which uses the acknowledged scientific methodology for product testing. The results were horrible.

Almost all the companies including Nestlé use formalin as preservative in their products (with the exceptions of Skims milk of Haleeb and open milk) to prolong shelf life of their perishable products (for detailed analysis of

testing see table below). Formalin is a dangerous chemical, which has serious implications on human health and is considered a carcinogen.

Milk is a highly perishable commodity, which shall be used within shortest possible time. Pakistan's traditional milk supply system had ensured that it is consumed while fresh. An attempt to industrialize this sector in 1960s failed miserably as it relied on Pasteurizing milk and maintaining its temperature at 4C till consumption. This did not suit the country's climate where temperature may rise to 48C in summer. High wastage rates made the industry unviable. Nestle in early 1980s came to the country with a different technological 'solution'. It brought Ultra Heat Treatment and TetraPak paper cartons. It built its feasibility on the expectation that UHT milk will remain safe in TetraPak for a time good enough to set a profitable chain of supply. Many experts believe that this technology works well only in theory and the high rate of spoiled milk returned from market still haunts the financial planners.

Formalin is a chemical normally used to preserve dead bodies. Formalin has many negative impacts on human health. If it becomes part of food, it turns into formic acid in human body and increases acidity level. More intake of formalin can cause breathing problems, coma and even death. US Environment Protection Agency and International Agency for Research on Cancer count formalin as one of the cancer-causing agents.



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## Laboratory analysis of milk brands available in Pakistani market

No	Brand Name	Mention Contents on label	Code No/ Batch No	Amount (in ml or litre)	Date of manu	Expiry Date	Formalin Presence	Total Energy (k Cal)	Calcium in 250 ml (mg)
PSQCA* Standard	Must	Must	Must	Must	Must	Must			
1	Nestlé Nesvita	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	83.1	391
2	Dairy Queen	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	129	277
3	Haleeb Skims	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	82.34	310
4	Haleeb	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	139	244
5	Nestlé Milkpak	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	155	238
6	Noorpur	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	142	527
7	Olpers		Yes	Yes			Yes	184.9	436
8	Open milk**						No	127	352

\*PSQCA: Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority

\*\* Sole non-UHT milk



**The Network for Consumer Protection**

40-A Ramzan Plaza, G-9/Markaz, Islamabad

Ph: 051 226 1085, Fx: 051 226 2495; [www.thenetwork.org.pk](http://www.thenetwork.org.pk)

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