WHO Recommendation on Artificial Sweeteners

Why in news?

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended against using artificial sweeteners to achieve weight loss and prevent lifestyle diseases.

What are artificial sweeteners?

- **Artificial sweeteners** –They are sugar substitutes that are used to sweeten foods and beverages with *very little to no calories.*
- They are also called as *non-nutritive sweeteners (NNS), non-sugar sweeteners (NSS),* low calorie sweeteners and intense sweeteners.
- **Common NSS** - Acesulfame K (Ace-K), aspartame, advantame, cyclamates, neotame, saccharin, sucralose, stevia, and stevia derivatives



What are the recommendations by WHO?

- **Lacks long term benefits** - Artificial sweeteners do not provide any long term benefits in reducing body fat in adults or children.
- **Diseases caused** - The use of sugar alternatives has been found to increase the risk of type 2 diabetes, depression, cardiovascular diseases, and causes digestive issues.
- It also causes bladder cancer and ***preterm births*** when consumed by pregnant women.
- **Weight loss** - Even though there could be weight loss in short term, in long term it leads to weight gain.
- The WHO has made these recommendations for everyone other than those who are already diabetic.

In India, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) prescribes the *maximum limit of artificial sweetener.*

What are the recommendations by health experts?

- **Natural Alternatives** - Health experts recommend considering natural alternatives such as fruits, dates, carrots, etc. to artificial sweeteners.
- **Limiting Intake** - Emphasize the need to be conscious of limiting the intake of artificial sweeteners.
- **Well balanced diet** - Including high quality natural foods, while avoiding high calorie drinks and snacks.
- **Diet colas** - Diet colas may not be as healthy as they seem. They may lead to weight

gain and other health problems.

What is the way forward?

- More research is needed so that it could help to clarify the risks and benefits of artificial sweeteners, and it could also lead to the development of new, safer artificial sweeteners.
- Artificial sweeteners could be regulated more strictly.
- Consumers could be educated about the potential risks and benefits of artificial sweeteners.

References

1. The Indian Express | Artificial Sweeteners
2. The Hindustan Times | Harmful Effects Of Artificial Sweeteners

