

Nutritionists warn over kid food inconsistencies

By NELLY MTEMA

NUTRITIONISTS have sounded an alarm over the increasing risks of using various processed food formulae on infants and young children below five years.

A paediatrician, Dr Augustine Massawe and Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC) specialists say that processed food formulae increasingly being given to children in that age bracket has many dangers, including endangering the liver as composition of the food is not meant for children.

Speaking in Dar es Salaam over the weekend during media training on the World Breastfeeding Day, Dr Massawe said much as he supports entrepreneur he

cautioned that products for infants need a clear formulae.

He gave an example of the so-called nutritious flour whose production is on the increase and said its composition is contrary to what the infants and young child stomachs can contain.

"I call those designated products as uncalled for mixture 'mkorogo' which put infants and young child healthy in danger than improving their growth as needed," he said.

Dr Massawe was irked by the composition of the flour which he said an entrepreneur will come up with mixtures of maize, rice, soya, millet, groundnuts and sardines and pack them in a one packet.

"This is unacceptable, because in a composition you have unnecessarily a number of items which are not needed and they do not add anything in terms of nutrients and worse enough have different boiling points," he said.

Moreover, he said, the infants and young child intestines are not fit for such kind of digestion, as a result the country is experiencing a number of liver complication which are uncalled for.

TFNC specialist Neema Joshua said they are trying their level best to educate the public on the need to observe proper diet, especially among infants and young children to ensure proper growth.

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She attributed the increase in malnutrition cases to lack of essential nutrients like carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins and fats in infant diet as many were being given as a single type of the essentials.

Dr Massawe counselled the public in general and parents in particular to prepare complementary flour, especially to infants from six month and above, which has only one ingredient-based formula like maize, as it has carbohydrates, corn flour and fibre.

When contacted, the Public Relations Officer of Tanzania Foods and Drugs Authority (TFDA), Ms Gaudensia Simwanza, said various initiatives were being taken by the authority to address the issue.

TFDA, which is the licensee of food products, conducted a number of training programmes, including seminars, to entrepreneurs on the importance to ensure that infant food mixtures have all the needed nutrients.

She said after training, they are registered with the ultimate goal of ensuring that what reaches the customers will be good for their health.