



Foundation warns on peanut products

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Aflatoxins were found in three peanut powder products during inspections on peanut and nut products, the Consumers' Foundation said yesterday and while the contamination levels did not exceed permissible limits, the foundation urged retailers and consumers to store peanut products properly to prevent risk of cancer from cumulative exposures to aflatoxin.

The foundation said 15 randomly sampled items — eight peanut products, three pistachio and fig products, and a cooked water chestnut — purchased from retailers and night market stalls in Taipei and New Taipei City and e-commerce platforms in July were inspected for labeling and tested for aflatoxins.

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• By Lee I-chia / Staff reporter

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Photo courtesy of the Consumers' Foundation via CNA

The foundation said among the 15 items, a peanut butter purchased from an e-commerce platform did not have the manufacturer's company name and contact information on its package label, which violates the labeling requirements.

Three peanut powder items tested positive for aflatoxins B2, G1 and G2, with total volumes between 0.2mcg and 1.2kg, not exceeding the permissible limits regulated by the Sanitation Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food (食品中污染物質及毒素衛生標準), the foundation said, adding that no aflatoxin B1 was detected.

It said although the total aflatoxin levels in the three peanut powder items met the regulation standards, all exposures have a cumulative effect and can be harmful to health in the long run.

As peanut powder is used in many food items, such as unfried spring rolls, guabao (割包) steamed buns, sweet mochi (麻糬), zongzi (粽子, glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo) and pig's blood cake (豬血糕), consumers should be careful in choosing these food items, it added.

The foundation said aflatoxins are often found in crop foods, nuts, beans and herbal medicines. It suggests that consumers buy such products when sold in vacuum packaging, to check for changes in food appearance, such as color or texture, before buying and to buy them in small packages to ensure they are consumed when fresh.

Consumers should read the food labels, as not all food items need to be stored in the refrigerator and try to consume them as fast as possible while they are fresh, it said, adding that food should also be put in sealed containers or proper packages when stored in a refrigerator.

In addition, the foundation said retailers should store food in proper environments to prevent aflatoxins and also to include the storage method instructions on the label for consumers to follow.