

**GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA  
DIRECTORATE OF FISHERIES::SHILLONG**

**General Public Information and Advisory**

1. Formalin is a solution of about 37% formaldehyde which is used as disinfectant, preservative for household products and animal tissues.
2. Formaldehyde is not permitted for use in foods as per Food Safety and Standards Regulations 2011.
3. The underlying motive of using formalin on fish (either as a dip or through ice laced/or made with formalin as an ingredient) is:
  - a. to extend the storage life of fresh or chilled fish
  - b. to artificially improve the sensory attributes i.e. appearance, so as to give a facade of fresh fish.
4. Ingesting large amounts of formaldehyde can generally cause severe abdominal pain, vomiting, coma, renal injury and possible death.
5. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) of WHO classifies formaldehyde as "**carcinogenic to humans**", with sufficient evidence for causing nasopharyngeal cancer in humans.
6. In most cases, dishonest traders use formaldehyde to prevent spoilage and keep fish marketable condition.

**Advisory to Consumers.**

1. Consumers should wash fish thoroughly with running tap water, as formaldehyde is soluble in water.
2. Cook fish thoroughly to an internal temperature of 75°C or above, as heat from cooking can also aid the removal of formaldehyde.
3. Consumers can check the fish for adulteration using rapid detection kit "CIFT Test" developed by ICAR-CIFT. The method is simple, rapid, and consumer friendly, detects only the added formaldehyde present in the fish.

**Advisory to local fish traders and retailers.**

1. The source of fish should be from credible sources.
2. Traders/retailers should refrain from using any un-approved chemical/additive, including formalin during any stage of storage, transport or supply.
3. Do not add formaldehyde to food in general, and fish in particular
4. If formalin is added intentionally or unintentionally due to lack of awareness, it is illegal and punishable.
5. Ensure that cold chain or proper icing is practiced while transporting fish and shellfish through longer distances.
6. Ensure integrity of product throughout the supply chain.
7. It is a good practice if the fish is screened for formaldehyde content during procurement with proper certification.

**Sd/-  
Director of Fisheries  
Meghalaya, Shillong**