

ICCN Poster Presentations

Food and the child

Breakfast patterns of primary school children in an informal settlement

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This study forms part of a larger project where a cost-effective and culturally acceptable novel food product will be developed as a supplement to breakfast for primary school children, aged six to 13 years old. Baseline measurements indicated that the nutritional status of the children in this school, were 17.4% underweight, 12.7% wasted and 18% stunted. The objective of this pilot study was to determine the breakfast patterns of the randomly selected subjects in the school in Eatonside. A questionnaire was drawn up, tested and completed by the children (n=175, 29% of total school population) in a class situation. The data were captured on an Excel spreadsheet and analysed for means and standard deviations. The results showed that 91% of children ate breakfast before going to school, and the breakfast consisted mainly of tea and bread (62%), maize meal porridge (25.5%) and the rest consumed mostly rice and potatoes. Breakfast cereal is only consumed by 1.2% of the children. Over weekends, most of the children (86.8%) consumed tea and bread and 13% do not eat any breakfast. The results confirm that the primary school children in this study eat breakfast before going to school, but the nutritional adequacy of the breakfast consumed is questionable. Further research is recommended to analyse the dietary intake and food consumption patterns in order to develop a suitable novel food product.

Junk food consumption: an indicator of changing dietary habit in Iranian children

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Introduction: Widespread consumption of junk foods deprives children of necessary nutrients during the critical first three years of life. Urbanization and media propaganda have caused traditional nutritious snacks to be replaced by low-quality junk foods.

Materials & Methods: To assess the extent of this problem in Iran, this study was conducted as part of the Anthropometrics National Indices Survey (ANIS) in 1998. In this study, 16418 under- three- year old children (18493 urban and 7925 rural) were chosen to determine their dietary intake (type and daily/weekly frequency) by a food frequency questionnaire. This included 51 food items from the four major food groups and from butter and oil, junk foods, fruit juices, and traditional food items (dried raisins and berries). The data were collected during interviews with mothers and analyzed by SPSS software.

Results: Consumption of junk food during the preceding week was observed in 47.1% and 51.0% (6-11 month- old) and in 90.3% and 88.7% (12-23 month- old) of urban and rural children, respectively. Whereas conventional snacks were consumed by 36.2% and 23.7% (12-23 month-old) and 34.7% and 28% (12-35 month- old) of urban and rural children. Weekly frequency of consumption of junk food was higher than major food items such as meat and eggs (9 vs.3 times weekly).

Conclusion: Replacement of conventional snacks (mainly natural products) with industrial and processed products is attributable to industrialization and urbanization, increased media coverage, and lifestyle changes in both urban and rural regions. We recommend education of the parents on making wiser choices for children's snacks, as this is a major component of their diet.