

## Factors Affecting Food Choice and Attitude of Choosing Food Items among Adolescents

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### Background

The teenage is a period of acceptance for many negative health behaviour including choice of food, vegetable and fruit consumption, etc. Several dietary behaviour have been linked with childhood obesity, including increased number of meals eaten outside the home, larger portion sizes of meals at restaurants and fast-food takeaways, and increased consumption of snacks and soft drinks. The ideations formed during the mid-adolescence lead to adoption of either favorable or unfavorable dietary pattern.

### Aims & Objectives

To assess and examine the various food choices, food fads among school going adolescents in Pondicherry and Tamilnadu as most of them are enrolled in schools in these states.

### Materials & Methods

A purposive and convenient sampling method was employed and two private schools one each from Puducherry and Trichy were selected. A validated food-choice questionnaire was administered to assess the

dietary intake, food fads and factors governing their choice of food among schoolchildren.

### Results

Three fourth (74%) of the children were already deciding on what food they consume, a major factor to consider in theory of planned behavior model to bring about any change in the food choice behaviour among adolescents. More than 55 percent of adolescents were often decide on what food they consume in the weekends, however most of them are not able to decide at home. Around 25 percent take less than 3 hours break between a meal or snacks. Almost all of them have 3 divided meals in a given day, with an option for snack once. Two third of the adolescents did not consume any fruits in the previous one week of the study. Only 10 percent had consumed on more than 3 days in the last week.

### Conclusions

This study further demonstrates the importance to study the existing pattern of dietary intake to determine the food preferences, beliefs and food fads of adolescent school children, so as to plan an appropriate nutrition education package in schools.