

Snacking Behaviour and Their Correlates among Urban School Going Adolescents

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Background

The rapid increase over the past three decades in the prevalence of childhood obesity in urban areas across India has led to increased concern about the diets of adolescents and children. Snacking is likely to play an important role in the development of overweight and obesity, yet little is known about the contexts of snacking in adolescents.

Aims & Objectives

To study the contexts associated with demographic characteristics of adolescents and with meal skipping, affordability and taste and presentation of food item including advertisements promoting certain snacks.

Materials & Methods

A cross-sectional survey was administered to 564 higher secondary students in grades of eleventh and twelfth standards. The students were drawn from 2 private higher secondary schools one from Puducherry and another from Trichy, Tamilnadu. In order to maximize the students' participation, the questionnaires

were distributed in classrooms.

Results

The adolescents select snacks based on taste over nutrition; they more often choose salty, crunchy foods as snacks over healthier alternatives. More frequent snacking reported among boys than girls. The most important factor they consider while buying any snacks is tastiness. Only 15% felt that the healthy nature of the snacks matters for them.

Conclusions

The study suggests that adolescent irrespective of the gender snack frequently. The increasing prevalence of snacking has as a potentially important influence on energy regulation in adolescents. Snacking is also commonly associated with undesirable health outcomes and dietary patterns. Understanding the context in which the adolescent snack and also the covariates such as skipping meals especially breakfast or dinner, may assist the medical professionals in the promotion of healthy food habits among adolescents.