

Behavioral and External Factors Influencing Food Preference Among Adolescents

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Background

The eating behaviour of adolescents had become increasingly under spotlight in recent years in India, amid claims that many adolescents have a poor diet. Irregular meal pattern and skipping meals are common among adolescents in school going age group. Their food preference and the food fads are mainly formed by the environmental stimuli such as siblings, television advertisements, classmates, social gatherings, etc.

Aims & Objectives

To study the attitudes of food preference and the predictors and influencing factors of their eating practices need to be known to formulate targeted approach in healthy eating.

Materials & Methods

A cross-sectional survey of 564 higher secondary students from 2 private higher secondary schools one from Puducherry and another from Trichy, Tamilnadu was done using a self-administered questionnaire designed to find and assess the various food preferences

and factors governing them among school going adolescents.

Results

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 last week. 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. Only 18 percent of children were able to control themselves from consuming too much of chocolates, sweets, savories or snacks. Fifty percent of the adolescents agreed to the fact they often eat too much on socializing events or functions. Only around 20 percent of them feel that the food preference is dependent of the family members or people whom they live with currently.

Conclusions

The preference for various food items for consumption by adolescents provides a gateway for medical fraternity in framing guidelines regarding healthy eating behaviour apart from methods to promote physical activity.