

Research Paper :

A study on food consumption pattern of pre-school children of Khagaria district of Bihar

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ABSTRACT

To assess the food consumption pattern of pre-school children, the present study was planned and conducted. Looking to this fact, the study was undertaken on a random sample of 100 pre-school children of Pansalwa village of Beldour block of Khagaria district of Bihar. An interview schedule was used for data collection. Daily dietary intake of the children was obtained with the help of 24-hour dietary recall method of diet survey which was undertaken for 3 consecutive days. The study revealed a significant deficit of approximately 50 per cent in all other food stuffs except cereal in the daily dietaries of pre-school children. Consumption of fruits, the protective food was very negligible so that more than 90 per cent of deficit was observed in the habitual diet of children when compared with low cost balanced diet recommended by ICMR.

Key words : Dietary recall, Food consumption pattern, Low cost balance diet

India has the highest child population in the world and children in the 0-6 year age group number around 158 million (Census of India, 2001). In the country, the highest percentage of child population was found in Bihar (40.8) and Uttar Pradesh (40.1) which are densely populated, while the lowest was found in Kerala (27.3) where the population is low. For a healthy working population, it is essential that children receive adequate nutrition to ensure proper physical and mental growth. Incidence of PEM and vitamin A deficiency are high among pre-schoolers. Nutrition plays a vital role as inadequate nutrition during childhood may lead to malnutrition, growth retardation, reduced work capacity and poor mental and social development (Awasthi and Kumar, 1999).

Nutritional status during the most vulnerable and growing period of childhood lays foundation for good health in later years. Nutrition is increasingly being recognized as a basic factor determining the human resource potential of the nation. Today's child is the nation's future economic asset. The quality of our future human resource is going to be determined largely by the investment made now for the sound development of our child population (Gopalan, 1993). The diets of children were found to contain inadequate amounts of pulses, green leafy vegetables, sugar, fats and oils and milk, as a result the diet exhibited deficits in energy and B-Carotene contents. The present study was conducted with keeping in view the following objectives : to find out daily dietary intake of pre-school children of Khagaria district and to assess the adequacy of habitual diets of pre-schoolers.

METHODOLOGY

To fulfill the objectives of the present study, it was planned and conducted on a random sample of 100 pre-school children of Pansalwa village of Beldour block of Khagaria district of Bihar. An interview schedule was used for data collection. Daily dietary intake of the children was obtained with the help of 24-hour dietary recall method of dietary survey which was undertaken for 3 consecutive days. A set of standard utensils was used to facilitate estimation of the amounts consumed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The child's mean daily intake of food was estimated and compared with low cost balanced diet (ICMR). The data regarding daily dietary intake of children are presented in Table 1, separately for the two age-groups *i.e.*, 1 to 3 years and 4 to 6 years children, respectively. Per cent adequacy of habitual diets of pre-schoolers has been presented in Table 2 and illustrated through Fig. 1-8.

Cereals :

Children were given cereals/ millets mostly wheat, in the form of a piece of chapattis, maize roti, rice, khichadi etc.

As per the recommended allowances for balanced diets for Indian children (ICMR, 1985), a child should consume 150g of cereals. Using this as a yardstick, the mean intake of cereals for 1-3 years aged children was found to be comparable of what is recommended (Table