

Food consumption pattern and dietary adequacy among adolescent girls of Jorhat district, Assam

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A sample of 450 adolescent girls within 10-18 years belonging to Tribal, Rural, Urban and Tea Garden labourer group were drawn to study the food intake pattern and adequacy of the diet consumed. The 24-hr-recall method was followed to assess the food intake pattern. Food consumption was not balanced as per ICMR norms. A deficit consumption of almost all foodstuffs except cereals, fish and other vegetables by almost all the respondents. Intake of pulses and green leafy vegetables was very low for Tribal, rural and tea garden labourer groups (<80% of RDA). Nutrient intake was mostly deficient in energy, protein, vitamin C, iron and calcium for all girls except for urban girls who had sufficiency of about 95.15 to 106.78 per cent of energy across all age groups. Amongst the micronutrients, intake of vitamin C was insufficient and the mean iron intake of the girls irrespective of the groups were far below the RDA (ranging between 38.0 to 66.0% of RDA) ranging between 38.0 to 60.0 per cent. From the nutrient quality of the diet, tea garden labourer girls were found to be the most nutritionally deprived among all the groups studied.

How to cite this article : Neog, Nilima and Baroova, Basanti (2012). Food consumption pattern and dietary adequacy among adolescent girls of Jorhat district, Assam. *Food Sci. Res. J.*, 3(1): 25-29.

Key Words : Adolescent girl, 24-hr-recall, RDA, BDR, Dietary adequacy

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent, defined by World Health Organization (1986) as a person aged 10-19 years, comprises about 20 per cent of the global population and more than 25 per cent of the country's total population. Adolescence is a period of profound physical and mental development (Myron, 1980) which demand an increased nutritional requirements. Though the nutritional demand is high for both the sexes, here girls' demands weigh more as they shoulder the future generation. However, these potential mothers are likely to face the constraints of nutritional inadequacies due to socio-economic limitations. The assessment of their nutritional status as influenced by the diet is a relevant prerequisite to ensure not only healthy adolescent

but also healthy motherhood. Adolescent girls are nutritionally vulnerable but have not received the proper attention and care they deserve. They have considered healthier than the young or the very old and hence their health problems are ignored (Ghosh, 1992). Adolescent health happens to be one of the most prioritized areas of research interest today. Changing dietary patterns among them have become an important cause of concern. A large segment of rural adolescent girls are suffering from chronic energy deficiency and iron deficiency anaemia, while on the other hand a good number of urban adolescents finding themselves 'at risk' to the problems of over weight and obesity. Unhealthy dietary practices, tend to skip breakfast, eat more meals outside the home, heavy emphasis on junk food, excessive TV exposure and sedentary life styles have affected the nutritional status of today's adolescents (Sadana *et al.*, 1997). However, there is paucity of research relating to food behavioural pattern of adolescent girls belonging to this region. The present study is an attempt to assess the food consumption pattern and dietary adequacy among the adolescent girls of Jorhat district, Assam.

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