

Fast food consumption and breakfast skipping of adolescent girls from different income groups in Patna (Bihar)

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Adolescence is one of the most challenging periods in human development. Dietary habits of childhood also get transformed during this phase of life. Irregular meals and alternative dietary patterns characterise the food habits of adolescents. Various studies have shown that adolescents are more prone to nutritional problems due to their unhealthy food habit. In the present study 300 college and high school going girls students in Patna were selected and examined to understand their eating behaviour using 24-hour dietary recall method. Eating behaviour of these girls was also examined vis-a-vis their family income. The study revealed that majority of the adolescent girls had shown more inclination towards fast food. However, the choice of fast food items varied among different income categories. Skipping of morning breakfast and evening snacks was more frequent among the adolescent girls with slight variation across different income groups. Thus, consumption of fast food and frequency of meals among adolescent girls were found to vary according to socio-economic status of their families. There is a need to provide nutrition education and inculcate better food habits to improve nutritional status of the adolescent girls. Educational institutions as well as parents may help in promoting positive health behaviour among these girls.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a unique period in life because it is a time of intense physical, psychosocial and cognitive development (WHO, 2006). The relatively uniform growth of childhood is suddenly altered by an increase in growth velocity during adolescence thereby contributing to more than 20 per cent of total stature and 40-50 per cent of body weight (Stang and Story, 2005 and Rao *et al.*, 2006). The physiological changes create an increased demand for nutrients and make adolescents nutritionally vulnerable. Primarily, requirements for calories dramatically increase due to physical growth and increased activities since this age is known to be highly active and energetic (Story *et al.*, 2002).

Dietary habits followed from childhood get changed during adolescence. Irregular meals, snacking, eating away

from home and following alternative dietary patterns characterise the food habits of adolescents. Unhealthy dietary behaviour and food habits such as omitting breakfast, preference for fast foods and frequent snacking are already prevalent among adolescents, even among those who are not overweight (Brugman *et al.*, 1997). The popularity of fast food among adolescents presents a serious nutritional problem, as negative eating habits adopted early in life tend to persist throughout adulthood (Levi *et al.*, 2006). The objectives of the present study is as follows: to understand the eating behaviour pattern of adolescent girls belonging to different income groups and to find out the frequency of fast food consumption and breakfast skipping of adolescent girls among different income groups.

METHODOLOGY

A study was carried out in Patna (Bihar), on 300 adolescent girls aged between 12 to 18 years. The data were collected using random sampling method from 9 government colleges and 6 government girls' schools within the jurisdiction of Patna

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