

Impact of nutrition counseling on consumption pattern of junk foods among adolescent girls of working mothers

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Sixty adolescent girls of working mothers aged 16-18 years who used to eat junk foods frequently were selected from two schools in Ludhiana and divided equally into two groups viz., Experimental (E) and control (C). The data on demographic information, junk food consumption pattern and nutrient intake were recorded before and after nutrition counseling. Nutrition counseling was in vernacular imparted for a period of three months. The practice of high consumption of junk foods like noodles, burgers, pao-bhaji, sandwiches, hot dogs, patties, pastries, pop-corn, potato chips, carbonated drinks, biscuits, muffins, toast, kulcha-channa, samosa, chocolates etc. have become common feature of adolescent's diet. It was observed that 86.7 and 93.3 per cent of subjects spent their monthly pocket money on junk foods in group E and C and majority ate junk foods once a week at least. Junk foods contributed to 54 and 57 per cent and 50 and 54.32 per cent to total energy intake in group E and C before and after nutrition counseling, respectively. The daily intake of energy and protein was less than ICMR (2010) recommendations, while intake of fats was adequate in group E after nutrition counseling. The results of present investigation suggested that there is need to impart nutrition counseling for longer duration to improve their dietary habits and healthy lifestyle.

Key Words : Adolescent girls, Junk food, Nutrition counseling, Working mothers

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INTRODUCTION

Junk foods are usually characterized as convenience foods, low in micronutrients, high in simple sugars, salt, non nutritious and highly palatable. These are mainly made up by using a lot of saturated fats which are unhealthy after digestion and release a lot of toxins into the body. Moreover, it lacks vitamins and minerals which are necessary to have good health and immunity to fight diseases. Ill effects of regular intake of junk foods are mainly obesity leading to inferiority complex, depression, heart diseases, high cholesterol, stunted growth, premature aging and tooth decay (Chhibber, 2010).

In India, adolescents accounts for one-fourth of the world's population (UNICEF, 2011). Adolescent's eating

behaviours are strongly influenced by their social environments, which include family, peer networks, schools, advertising, religion and knowledge. They frequently overconsume fast foods and underconsume fruits, vegetables and dairy products. School canteens are offering foods high in fat and sugar which might stop the children from taking healthy meals either at school or at home (Singh, 2010). Working mothers have less attention to their children's nutrition and health outcomes. Therefore, children of working mothers tend to consume more processed junk foods, fats, meat, milk, fish and less fruit juice (Fernandez, 2006).

Nutrition counseling is a process by which beliefs, attitudes, environmental influences and knowledge about food and health are channelized into actual practices which are sound and consistent with the individual needs, purchasing power, food availability, health and socio-cultural background. It is one of the most effective tool of changing the food habits without affecting their sentiments (Monga *et al.*, 2008). Adolescent girls and their mothers are ignorant about the ill effects of junk foods, right choice of healthy and nutritious foods in their daily diet. Nutrition counseling regarding the

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