Baby and Toddler Food

The following report by the Rudd Center offers an in-depth review of the nutritional content of baby and toddler food and beverage products marketed to parents.

**Baby Food FACTS: Nutrition and marketing of baby and toddler food and drinks**

By UNCONN Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity

Birth to two years is a critical period for developing healthy food preferences and eating habits and preventing childhood obesity. Baby Food FACTS provides a comprehensive analysis of the nutritional content of food and drink products marketed to parents for their babies and toddlers (up to age 3), the messages used to promote these products, and how well the marketing messages correspond with expert advice about feeding young children.


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Gangliosides are a group of sialylglycosphingolipids, widely distributed in body tissues, mainly as components of plasma membranes. They play crucial roles in neurodevelopment, gut maturation, and immune system. Dietary gangliosides have been shown to bring about benefits including cognition and immune support for breastfed infants. There is dearth of studies on dietary gangliosides intake or plasma ganglioside levels for toddlers. Given toddlers are still growing rapidly, a good understanding of ganglioside intake during this early childhood period is important for future dietary recommendations. The aim of this study was to provide information on dietary ganglioside intake in Malaysian toddlers and correlations with serum ganglioside levels.


Indian adolescents' over reliance on foods such as nutrient-poor snacks, sugar-sweetened beverages and take-away foods puts them at significant risk of obesity and several diet-related chronic diseases. Therefore, the factors that influence their dietary behaviours need to be better understood in order to develop effective nutrition promotion strategies. The purpose of this qualitative inquiry was to investigate adolescents’, parents’, teachers’, and school principals’ perceptions of the main influences on adolescent eating behaviours. Fifteen adolescents aged 14-15 years, 15 parents, 12 teachers and 10 principals from 10 private English-speaking schools in Kolkata, India, participated in semi-structured interviews. The digitally-recorded conversations were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically. The 52 interviews revealed a number of factors that may influence adolescents’ eating habits including parent and peer influences, home and school food environments, and the mass media. Emerging evidence suggests that future health and nutrition promotion interventions need to target the different influences on Indian teenagers’ food consumption.

Deakin University: News

*Deakin’s School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences has been ranked number 1 in the world.*

Congratulations to all of the staff and to the PhD and Honours students at Deakin’s School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences. In early December the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) released their ranking of Sport Science Schools and Departments. Deakin’s School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences was ranked number 1 in the world! The ARWU is a well-respected independent international ranking scheme, which considers candidate universities based on two criteria: First, the candidate should either be a sport university or have sport-related units. Second, the institution should be actively engaging in research in the past five years. A total of 361 universities or about 400 sport-related units were selected and ranked. Ranking of universities considers several indicators of academic or research performance, including papers indexed in Web of Science, total citations, citations per paper, papers published in the top 25% journals, and percentage of internationally collaborated papers of an institution.

This is an outstanding outcome for Deakin University, and is a reflection of the high calibre of the research being conducted in the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition, the Centre for Sport Research, and by Deakin’s Honours and PhD students.
Deakin University: Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research (I-PAN) recent publications


Rapid growth in the first six months of life is a well-established risk factor for childhood obesity, and child feeding practices (supplementation or substitution of breast milk with formula and early introduction of solids) have been reported to predict this. The third largest immigrant group in Australia originate from China. Case-studies reported from Victorian Maternal and Child Health nurses suggest that rapid growth trajectories in the infants of Chinese parents is common place. Furthermore, these nurses report that high value is placed by this client group on rapid growth and a fatter child; that rates of breastfeeding are low and overfeeding of infant formula is high. There are currently no studies which describe infant growth or its correlates among this immigrant group.

Recent scientific publications

Child, teenage and family nutrition


The present study investigates the effectiveness of different strategies to improve Willingness to Taste disliked vegetables and the moderating role of Reward Sensitivity. Preschool children (N = 204; age: M = 4.48, SD = 1.01) were randomly allocated to one of four different Willingness to Taste strategies. The findings indicate that first, Willingness to Taste is higher in the modelling and reward strategies compared to neutral instructions. Second, there is a differential effect of Willingness to Taste strategies dependent upon individual differences: children high in Reward Sensitivity were more likely to taste immediately when rewarded, while children low in Reward Sensitivity were more willing to taste when verbally encouraged, but with hesitation. This article thus highlights the roles of both individual differences and behavioral techniques for promoting a healthy diet in children.

Food policy and public health nutrition


Internationally, there is increasing recognition of the importance of multilevel policies and actions that address healthy and environmentally friendly food behaviours. However, it is not yet clear which actions are most suitable to support consumers to adopt both behaviours concurrently. To this end, we undertook a qualitative study to assess consumer perceptions, experiences and attitudes towards healthy and environmentally friendly foods and four target behaviours: reducing overconsumption of food beyond energy needs, reducing consumption of low-nutrient energy dense foods, eating less animal- and more plant-derived foods, and reducing food waste. Online in-depth interviews were held with 29 Australian food shoppers representing different levels of involvement with health and
environment in daily food choices. The results indicate that compared to health, the relationship between food and the environment is rarely considered by consumers. The four target food behaviours were primarily associated and motivated by an impact on health, except for not wasting foods. Participants had the most positive attitude and highest motivation for eating less processed and packaged foods, mostly to avoid excessive packaging and ‘chemicals’ in foods. This was followed by the behaviours reducing food waste and overconsumption. Conversely, there was a predominantly negative attitude towards, and low motivation for, eating less animal-derived products and more plant based foods. Overall, consumers found a joined concept of healthy and environmentally friendly foods an acceptable idea. We recommend that health should remain the overarching principle for policies and actions concerned with shifting consumer behaviours, as this personal benefit appears to have a greater potential to support behaviour change. Future consumer focused work could pay attention to framing behavioural messages, providing intermediate behavioural goals, and a multiple target approach to change habitual behaviours.


Enhancing the use of evidence in policymaking is critical to addressing the global burden of nutrition-related disease. Whilst the public health nutrition community has embraced evidence-informed policymaking, their approach of defining relevant evidence and evaluating policy has not brought about major shifts in policymaking. This article uses a public health nutrition case study to refine a novel theory-informed framework for enhancing the use of evidence in government public health nutrition policymaking. Our aim is to contribute insights from evidence-informed policy to the emerging paradigm in public health nutrition policymaking.

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