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ABSTRACT

The basis of our dietary choices and our nutritional status is established early in life. The patterns initiated in childhood can affect our health and well being at every stage. **Aims & Objectives:** The aim of this study was to investigate the dietary patterns and nutritional status of children in Ahmedabad city. **Materials and Methods:** In structured interviews, 200 mothers were asked to give information about their child's feeding habit during childhood, daytime sugar intake, awareness regarding the nutritional needs at various ages. **Result:** Most mothers follow the traditional Indian meal pattern whereas 75% of kids snack twice a day. Kids were a part of the family's food selection and purchase process. Most mothers follow a routine fixed diet from Monday to Saturday and on weekends that they tend to modify. **Conclusion:** It was concluded from the study that nutrient requirements of most children were not met on daily basis. There was irregularity in taking meals and most families did not follow a proper dietary regimen. Also there was lack of reinforcement for healthy snacking pattern.

KEYWORDS: childhood, nutritional status, meals.

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INTRODUCTION:

The concept of oral health correlated to quality of life stems from the definition of health that the WHO gave in 1946. Health is understood to be “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. The programs for the prevention of oral diseases concern teaching about oral hygiene and healthy eating, fluoride prophylaxis, periodic check-ups, sessions of professional oral hygiene, and secondary prevention programs¹. The term “bionutrition” refers to the important interactions which exist between diet, use of nutrients, genetics, and development. This term emphasizes the role of nutrients in maintaining health and preventing pathologies at an organic, cellular, and subcellular level².

There exists a unique relationship between diet and oral health: a balanced diet is correlated to a state of oral health (periodontal tissue, dental elements, quality, and quantity of saliva). Vice versa, an incorrect nutritional intake correlates to a state of oral disease³⁻⁶.

Diet influences the development of the oral cavity: depending on whether there is an early or late nutritional imbalance, the consequences are certainly different. In fact, an early nutritional imbalance influences malformations the most. Moreover, the different components of the

stomatognathic apparatus undergo periods of intense growth alternated with periods of relative quiescence: it is clear that a nutritional imbalance in a very active period of growth will produce greater damage³.

A shortage of vitamins and minerals in the phase before conception influences the development of the future embryo, influencing dental organogenesis, the growth of the maxilla, and skull/facial development^{1,2}.

Despite credible scientific advances and the fact that caries is preventable, dental decay in the primary dentition of young children continues to pose a serious threat to child welfare. In developing countries like India, changing lifestyle and dietary patterns are markedly increasing the caries incidence⁷.

Mothers are primary promoters of oral hygiene and they have a major influence on the dietary habits and food choices of children. Patterns of behaviour learnt in early childhood are deeply ingrained and resistant to change. Mothers have an important role in this aspect⁸. Significantly, more mothers of children with caries, lack knowledge about some of the determinants and prevention of caries. It is assumed that an increase in the knowledge of mothers will influence their self-care habits and dietary practice and, in turn, improve the dietary and oral hygiene habits of children to prevent caries⁹.

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AIM AND OBJECTIVES

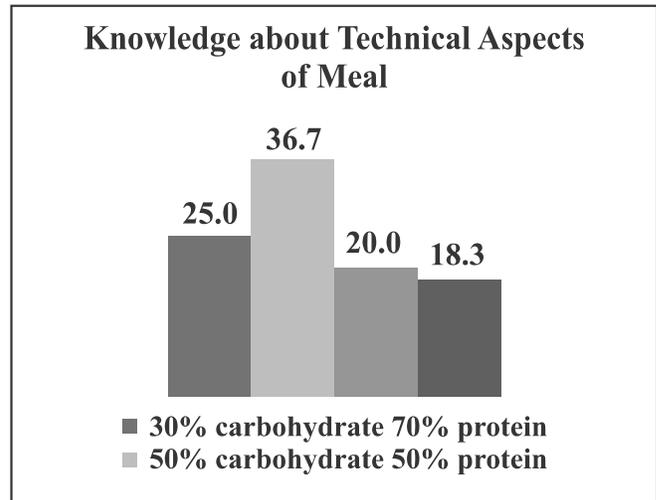
The aim of this study was to investigate the dietary patterns and nutritional status of children in Ahmedabad city. The objective was to determine the knowledge and attitude of mothers regarding nutrition and health.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

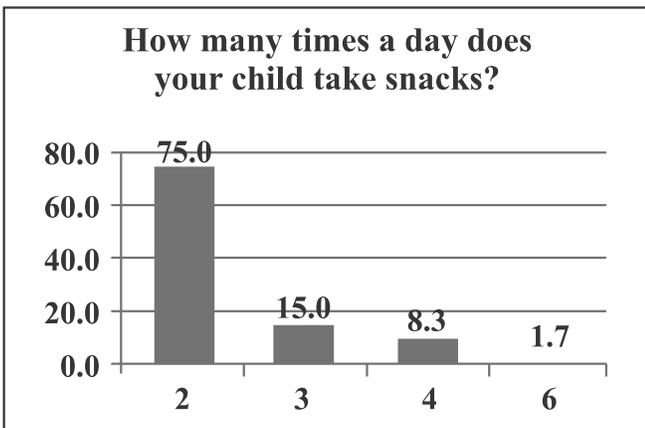
In structured interviews, 200 mothers were asked to give information about their child's feeding habits during childhood, daytime sugar intake, awareness regarding the nutritional needs at various ages. Patient proforma contained total 24 questions regarding the present feeding practices of children as well as regarding maternal attitude and awareness about the nutrition and oral health.

RESULTS

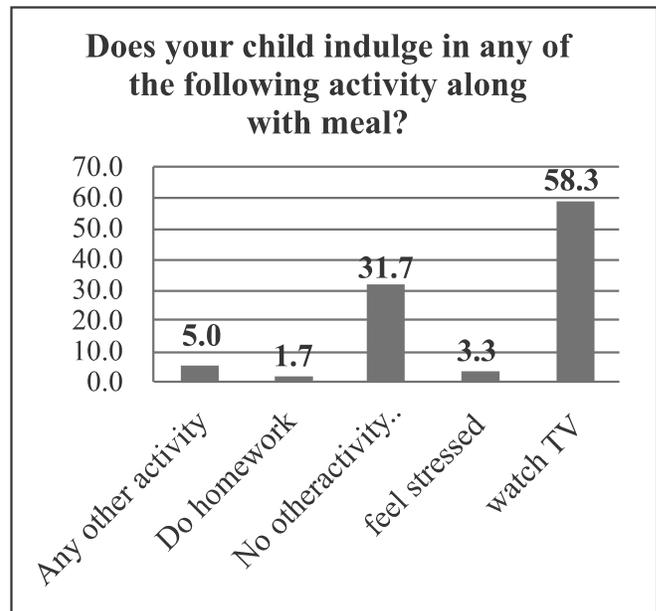
The result of the questionnaire was as follows:



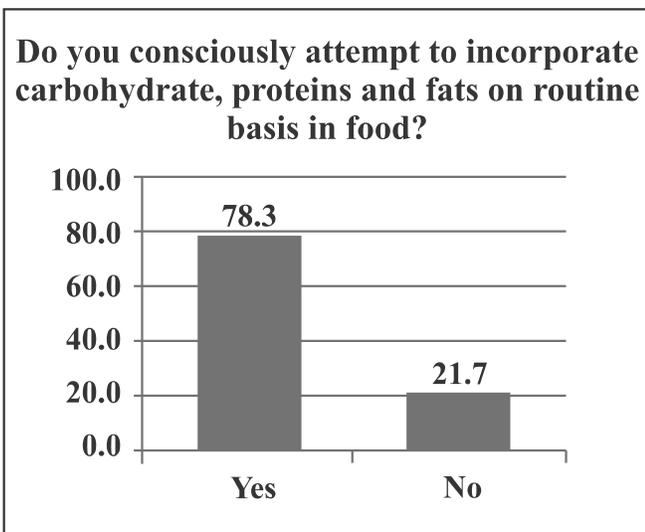
Though most mothers claimed that they provided adequate meals a day and did incorporate carbohydrate, proteins, fats, they were not aware of their appropriate proportions according to their child's age.



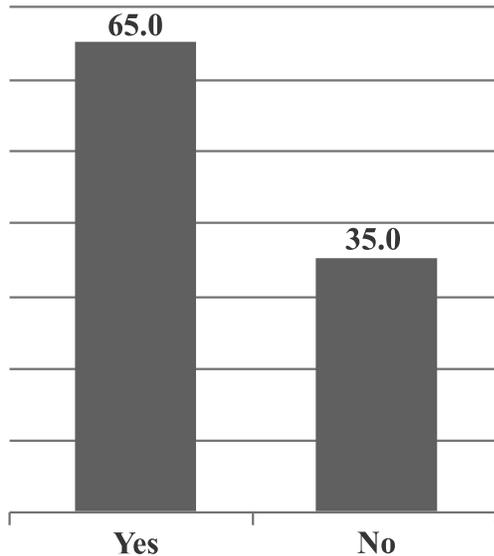
Most mothers followed the traditional Indian meal pattern whereas 75% of kids snack twice a day.



Only 31% of kids did no other activity except eating. Most children were not emotionally involved in the food they eat.

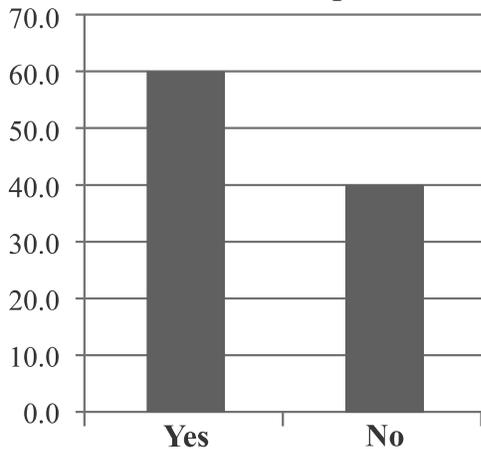


Do you include your child in food purchasing and preparation?



Kids were a part of the family's food selection and purchase process

Does your family follow a structured diet plan?



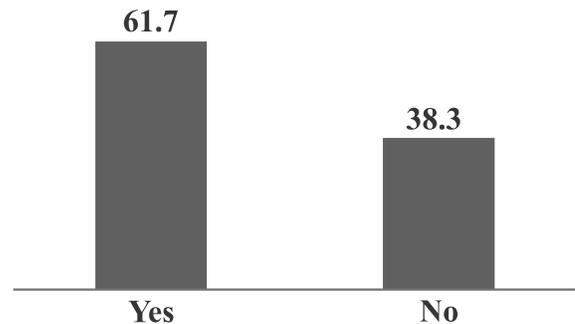
Most mothers followed a routine fixed diet from Monday to Saturday. It was only on weekends that they tend to modify.

Do you substitute a food item with another with similar nutritional value when it is rejected by your child?



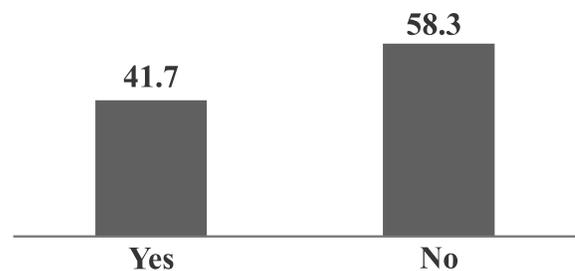
In urban areas though mothers made efforts to make meal nutritious and appealing, despite it they were not able to make their children consume it entirely.

Are you satisfied with your child's nutritional intake?

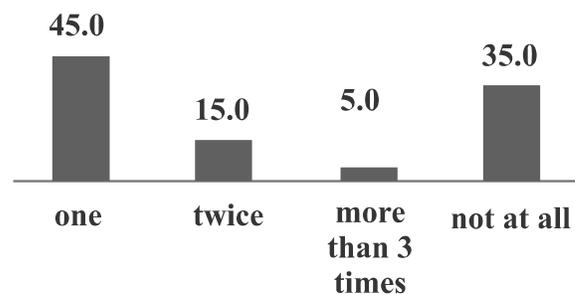


The nutritional intake was adequate according to the mothers, but it was not adequate according to the scientifically recommended principles.

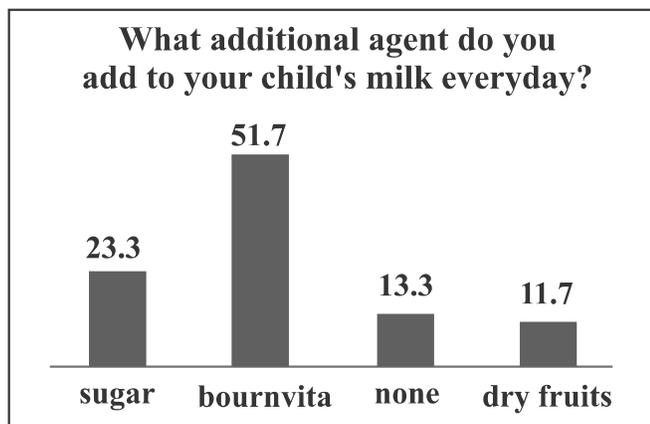
Are you aware that syrups and antibiotics given in the 1st year of life can cause tooth decay?



How many times a day does your child take candies / toffees / chocolate?



A significant proportion of mothers were not aware that syrups caused tooth decay Also only 35% kids did not take chocolates at all, rest consumed chocolates at will.



Most mothers made conscious attempts towards their child's nutritional intake. But most were random without any guided principle

DISCUSSION

- From the time a baby is born till adulthood, it is the mother who is responsible for the nutritional requirements of the child
- The study mainly emphasizes that in urban areas the knowledge regarding nutritional needs is adequate but there still is a lag in implementation of habits
- Whereas in rural areas there is still a need to empower mothers regarding the technical aspects of food selection

- There is a need to incorporate education to mothers
- Provide the mothers with structured plan for the child at every stage of growth
- Assess the nutritional principles of families and suggest them with rectification in case of improper diet regimens
- There is a need to organize workshops for mothers
- Every child can be made healthy
- A simple modification / addition of foods from everyday routine is what is required
- All that the mothers need is guidance
- Just knowing nutritional knowledge is not sufficient
- Empowering them with a technical know-how could change a lot.

CONCLUSIONS

From the above study it is concluded that nutrient requirements of most children are not met on a daily basis. There is irregularity in taking meals and most families do not follow a proper diet regimen. Also there is lack of reinforcement for healthy snacking patterns.

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