

## Eating Habits and Dietary Behaviour of Adolescent Boys & Girls

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### Abstract

**Aim:** The aim of the study was to observe the eating habits and dietary behaviour of adolescent boys and girls. **Method:** One hundred (N=100, 51 males and 49 females) adolescents between the ages 16-19 years were randomly selected. Each subject was administered with a set of a questionnaire, a 24- hour dietary recall and food frequency questionnaire after taking consents. Height and weight of adolescents were also noted in order to find out their Body Mass Index (BMI). **Results:** The mean height and weight of boys was 168.9 cm and 67.2 kg and that of girls was 155.8cm and 52.7 kg respectively. The 17.8% of the boys were found to be overweight as compared to only \_\_% of girls. A very irregular food eating pattern was observed in both boys and girls. The 63% of subjects followed 3-meals per day pattern of food intake. In addition to 3-meals per day pattern, 57% of subjects were also taking snacks more than two times in a day. The 45% subjects said that they were eating snacks because they 'missed a meal' and an astonishing 29% said they were habituated to take snacks. **Conclusion:** It was concluded that there was an irregular eating meal pattern in the adolescents. They consumed lots of snacks because they missed regular meals especially breakfast. Some of them were also habituated to take snacks or eating junk food like fried food, chips, instant noodles etc.

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### Introduction

Adolescence is the period of rapid transition between childhood and adulthood. As stated by WHO (1986), individuals between the ages 10-19 years are termed as 'adolescents'. They roughly make about 20% of the total world population, out of which India is home to the highest number of adolescents globally. (UNICEF, 2011). Adolescence is also considered as a period of rapid growth and development. During this period, a child experiences changes not just in the physical parts of his body but also in cognitive and behavioural dimension of human development (Simmons et al. 1987). Physical changes include changes in height and body structure along with attainment of pubertal characteristics. About 45% of skeletal growth takes place during adolescence (Rees, Christine, 1989). This period also sees changes in relationships of adolescents with parents and society. Increase in the sense of autonomy, self-belief takes place during adolescence and opinions of peers, advisors and role models suddenly gain more importance than parents. (Noller and Callan 1991, Shepherd and Dennison 1996, Jackson 1993) All these changes in some way or the other effect the dietary habits of an adolescents. Although nutrition effects growth and development in all stages of life, but the need for optimal nutritional intake is highest during adolescence. (Litshitz, Tarim et al, 1993) Indian Council of Medical Research, (ICMR) has given certain guidelines