Abstract

Background: Many researchers found that the actual snacks served in child-care centers are foods of low nutritional value (e.g., cookies, chips). Kids aren’t born with a craving for unhealthy food and adiposelike foods. This conditioning happens over time as kids are exposed to more and more unhealthy food choices. To encourage healthy eating habits, the challenge is to make nutritious choices appealing. Following the proper healthy nutritional tips can dramatically support a child’s healthy growth and development into adulthood.

Objectives: The main objective of this study is to investigate the tips that used by the parents in Hail to improve their kids’ nutritional status, and to investigate the general nutritional habits of kids in Hail city.

Material and methods: Questionnaires have been distributed to 325 parents in Hail city. All parents asked to fill them google drive. Data were analyzed by using SPSS and EXCEL software.

Results: Most of the kids’ samples tested on this study are mainly consumed an empty calories’ snacks (biscuit and chocolate) with low nutritional value and also, they do not consume the fresh fruits and vegetables in regular base. In addition, about half of them are not doing any kind of physical activity to overcome the previous problem. Some parents follow some tips to improve their kid’s nutritional status.

In this study, the parents’ education level was varied. However, we found that there is no significant effect of parents’ education in the type of snacks, consuming vegetables and fruits and kids’ physical activity.

Conclusion: Among the nutritional tips that parents usually use, they found that the most tips that effectively improve the quality of their kids’ dietary intake, were: prepare the food in an attractive way, let the kids cook with them, and the last tip was give them supplement or vitamins with extremely picky children.

I. Introduction

Healthy eating can help children maintain a healthy weight, avoid certain health problems, stabilize their energy, and sharpen their minds. A healthy diet can also have profound effects on a child’s sense of mental and emotional wellbeing, helping to prevent conditions such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and ADHD (1). Healthy diet can support a child’s healthy growth and development into adulthood and may even play an important role in the psychological status of young people. If the child has already been diagnosed with a mental health problem, a healthy diet can help him to manage the symptoms and regain control of his health (2).

It’s important to remember that kids aren’t born with a craving for unhealthy food and an aversion to vegetables. This conditioning happens over time as kids are exposed to more and more unhealthy food choices (3).

Some research found that Kids who enjoy breakfast every day have better memories, more stable moods and energy, and score higher on tests (4).

Eating a breakfast high in quality protein, from enriched cereal, yoghurt, milk, cheese, eggs, meat, or fish, can even help teenagers lose weight (5).

Whether they’re toddlers or in their teens, children develop a natural preference for the foods they enjoy the most. To encourage healthy eating habits, the challenge is to make nutritious choices appealing.

Some of the tips that been followed to introduce whole nutrients into kids’ diet are:

- Focus on overall diet rather than specific foods. Kids should be eating more whole, minimally processed food, food that is as close to its natural form as possible, and less packaged and processed food (6).

- Also, one of effective tips to “be a role model”, the childhood impulse to imitate is strong so don’t ask your child to eat vegetables while you gorge on potato chips (7).

- Some researcher found that Cook more meals at home can have a huge impact on kids’ health. If you make large batches, cooking just a few times can be enough to feed your family for the whole week (7).

- Also, some studies found that involving kids in shopping for groceries and preparing meals, can teach them about different foods, and how to read food labels can improve their nutritional status (8).
Also, keeping plenty of fruit, vegetables, and healthy beverages (water, milk, pure fruit juice) can help the kids to avoid unhealthy snacks like soda, chips, and cookies (9).

Following the proper healthy nutritional tips can dramatically support a child’s healthy growth and development into adulthood and may even play an important role in their mental and psychological status.

II. Objective
1. The main objective of this study is to investigate the tips that used by the parents in Hail to improve their kids’ nutritional status.
2. To investigate the general nutritional habits of kids in Hail city.

III. Material and Methods

Study design: Experimental Studies

Sample size: 325 parents.

Study Place: Hail city.

procedure: all parents asked to fill a questionnaire by the google drive.

the questionnaire included the following items:
- Child age.
- Parents education.
- Type of snack the kid consuming.
- The way to make your kid eat healthy food.
- The most effective way that follow.
- Kids activity.

Statistical Analysis:
Data were analyzed descriptively (frequency and crosstabs) by using SPSS and EXCEL software. And use Chi-square tests to assess significant (P-value of less than 0.05).

IV. Results and Discussion

In this study, the age groups of participants range between 0-12. Fifty-five kids (17%) were between (1-2) years old, 73 kids (22%) were between (3-5) years old, 93 kids (29%) were between (6-8) years old, 62 kids (19%) were between (9-10) years old and 42 kids (13%) were between (11-12) years old. The highest age group was from 6 to 8 (fig 1).

Figure 1: Age groups of participated children

We found that 47% of kids do physical activity sometimes, and 40% of kids they don’t do any kind of physical activity, while only 13% of them do physical activity regularly (fig. 2).
We found that the higher percentage of snacks that the kids consume were biscuit (39%), chocolate (26%), milk (14%), fruit (11%), juice (5%), vegetables (3%), and cookies (2%) (fig.3).

Similar to our finding that the biscuit and chocolate are the highest consumed snacks, other research found that the actual snacks served in child-care centers are foods of low nutritional value (e.g., cookies, chips) and also were found to be the most common items served at afternoon snack (10).

When we asked the parents about their kid’s consumption of fruits and vegetables, the answers were as follow: 64% of the answers were sometimes, 25% yes and 11% of the answers were no (fig. 4).

Similar to our finding of relatively low intake of fruits and vegetables, previous studies found that children receive insufficient amount of fruits and vegetables, while they consume excessive amount of added sugars, fats, and sodium in their diet (11).

Many previous studies have showed the insufficient consumption of fruits and vegetables in childhood may increases the risk of future chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease (12).
Among the choices of nutritional tips that parents usually use, we found that the most tips that effectively improve the quality of their kids’ dietary intake, were: prepare food in attractive way (48%), let the kids cook with them (9%), give them supplement or vitamins (14%), and the last was other (29%) (fig. 5).

The main other tips that parents used were motivation (31%), explain the benefit of food (20%), eat the meals with family was (19%), give kids gift (14%), watch T.V or iPad during meals was (11%), and the last tip was change the food kinds regularly (5%) (fig. 6).

Similar to our findings Tucker, 2016 found that Preparing healthy food with various shapes, colors, and configurations makes it more fun and appealing to preschoolers and effectively increase their healthy eating (13).

Also, some research found that preparing healthy food with various shapes, colors, and configurations makes it more fun and appealing to pre-school kids. This therefore is effective for increasing their healthy eating (14).

Previous study reported that, the main supplement usually a parent used is a meal replacement shake which is a quick way to get nutrition into a picky eater or a child with a small appetite (15).

Some previous studies, found that health messages and motivation messages increased children's fruit and vegetable intake, whether health and motivation messages can also be used to promote meaningful changes on children's dietary behavior (16).

Other study also found that parents commonly use gifts, for example money, chocolate or doll as tips to encourage their kids to eat more nutritious foods (17).

Supporting to our finding, some studies found that the frequency of shared family meals is significantly related to nutritional health in children and adolescents and they also found that children and adolescents who share family meals 3 or more times per week are more likely to be in a normal weight range and have healthier dietary and eating patterns than those who share fewer than 3 family meals together. In addition, they are less likely to engage in disordered eating (18).

Other studies have found that TV viewing reduced energy intake during meals and snacks for some children, particularly children who are accustomed to eating during TV viewing (19).

However, some researchers said that eating while watching TV is linked to increased weight status in children (20).
**Table 1:** Effects of parents’ education on type of snacks, consuming vegetables and fruits and kids’ physical activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variables</th>
<th>Parents Education</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>illiteracy</td>
<td>primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>type of snacks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chocolate</td>
<td>3 (3.6%)</td>
<td>6 (7.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biscuit</td>
<td>6 (4.7%)</td>
<td>8 (6.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cookies</td>
<td>1 (12.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fruit</td>
<td>1 (2.9%)</td>
<td>2 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milk</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>2 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vegetables</td>
<td>1 (11.1%)</td>
<td>1 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juice</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat vegetables and fruits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>6 (7.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>2 (5.9%)</td>
<td>2 (5.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some times</td>
<td>11 (5.3%)</td>
<td>11 (5.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do exercise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>2 (4.7%)</td>
<td>4 (9.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>8 (6.3%)</td>
<td>4 (3.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some times</td>
<td>3 (2.0%)</td>
<td>11 (7.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*=<0.05
In this study, the educational level of parents varies between illiteracy and post graduate level. So, we statistical analyzed the effects of parents’ education on the type of snacks, consuming vegetables and fruits and kids’ physical activity. And we found that, there is no significant effect of parents’ education in those parameters (P 0.555 – 0.395 – 0.356)

IV. Conclusion

1. Most of the kids’ samples tested on this study are mainly consumed an empty caloriessnacks (biscuit and chocolate) with low nutritional value and also, they do not consume the fresh fruits and vegetables in regular base. In addition, about half of them are not doing any kind of physical activity, to overcome the previous problem some parents, follow some tips to improve their kid’s nutritional status.
2. Among the nutritional tips that parents usually use, they found that the most tips that effectively improve the quality of their kids’ dietary intake, were: prepare the food in attractive way, let the kids cook with them, and the last tip was give them supplement or vitamins with extremely picky children.
3. In this study, the parents’ education level was varied. However, we found that there is no significant effect of parents’ education in the type of snacks, consuming vegetables and fruits and kids’ physical activity

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