

**THE IMPACT OF SHORT TERM NUTRITION EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS ON
DIETARY AND WEIGHT RELATED BEHAVIOURS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL
CHILDREN EIGHT TO TWELVE YEARS OLD.**

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Background: Childhood Obesity is a major public health problem in the Caribbean. Its prevalence has been drastically increasing particularly among children of primary school age over recent years.

Objective: The objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of a short-term school based, multi-component nutrition education intervention on improving knowledge, attitude and behavior of primary school towards better dietary and activity habits.

Design: The study was a randomized, controlled, school-based nutrition education intervention conducted over a period of one year. Five hundred and forty standard four students from 12 schools in Sangre Grande located in the North East district of Trinidad.

Results: On average children in the Intervention group has significantly higher fruit intakes but lower vegetable intakes posttest than their counterparts in the non-intervention group. Additionally, children in the Intervention group had significant lower mean intakes of soda, fried foods, high caloric snacks than those in the non-intervention group. Post-intervention, childhood eating attitude test (ChEAT) scores were significantly lower while knowledge scores were significantly higher in the intervention group than the non-intervention group. Finally, participants in the intervention group reported reduced hours watching TV and increased participation in moderate-to high physical activity at school.

Conclusion: The intervention produced significant reductions in the intakes of high calorie snack consumption, fried foods, sodas, fruits and television viewing. It also resulted in a higher

level of moderate-to-high physical activity increase, and improved knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of children in this population. Practical nutrition education, if in cooperated into the present school curriculum may serve to reduce the incidence of childhood and adult obesity in this population.