

AN EVALUATION OF KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE, AND FRUIT AND VEGETABLE
CONSUMPTION IN SCHOOL CHILDREN
AGED 10-12 YEARS OLD

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Background: Research indicates that consuming a diet rich in fruits and vegetables promotes health and protects against many chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, stroke and cancer (Gaziano et al., 1995; Gillman et al., 1995; Key et al., 1996; Steinmetz & Potter, 1996). Additionally, fruit and vegetable consumption during childhood may reduce the risk of a number of childhood illnesses including respiratory symptoms (Antova et al., 2003).

Objective: To assess primary school children's fruit and vegetable related knowledge, attitude and practices.

Design: Cross-sectional study. Three primary schools in Maraval, Trinidad. Fruit and vegetable knowledge, attitudes and practices was assessed using a three component (29-item) questionnaire. One hundred and two students in Standard Four from ages 10 to 12.

Results: More males received higher knowledge scores than their female counterparts as well as the 'mixed' race receiving the highest marks. The majority of students was not sure how they felt about vegetables and most had positive attitudes about fruits. None reported crying to eat fruits and vegetables. No significant difference was observed in different schools regarding fruit and vegetable consumption $F(2,99)=1.6, P>0.001$. There was also no significant difference in fruit and vegetable consumption by gender ($t= 1.069, df=100, p>0.05$).

Conclusion: Primary school children had low nutrition related scores and a negative attitude toward vegetables even though they did not mind trying new types. Positive views were received about fruit consumption and it was seen that the student's fruit and vegetable consumption was insufficient.

