THE CALORIC CONTRIBUTION OF COMMERCIALLY PACKAGED BEVERAGES AMONG MID-LEVEL PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

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Background: The consumption of sugar sweetened beverages (SSBs) such as soft drinks, fruit juice and milk based drinks is a usual practice among children of all ages. This practice has increased over the past years. At the same time, the prevalence of childhood obesity has also risen (11). These drinks are consumed in large amounts during school age years. The majority of the drinks consumed are full calorie (non-diet) beverages and are commercially packaged. These drinks are provided by manufacturing companies in the beverage industry, and are well marketed to attract everyone, especially children.

Objective – To determine both the individual and cumulative caloric contribution of commercially packaged sugar sweetened beverages among mid-level primary school children, and its possible effect on weight gain.

Design – A cross sectional study.Forty one children, ages 9 to 11 years in a Standard 3 class were conveniently selected to participate in this study. Information on beverage consumption was obtained using an interviewer administered questionnaire. The caloric contribution was manually calculated using data that was obtained from the Nutrition Facts label.

Results – All of the selected subjects completed the study. The primary school children consumed soft drinks, fruit juice drinks and milk based drinks on a daily basis. The caloric contribution from milk based drinks was the greatest, while fruit juice drinks contributed the least amount of calories. The caloric contribution from soft drinks was greater than that from juice drinks, but less than milk based drinks.

Conclusion – Primary school children need to limit their intake of commercially packaged sugar sweetened beverages as they can contribute a large amount of extra calories to their diets, and can also result in possible weight gain