

**TO EXAMINE THE PERCEPTIONS OF  
AND BARRIERS TO HEALTHY EATING AMONGST ADOLESCENTS AGES 13-17.**

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**Background:** Reports of the Caribbean region have indicated that non-communicable diseases also known as lifestyle diseases, are constantly increasing every year, and what is even more disturbing is that it's projected increase involves many young adults. Healthy eating can be seen as a solution to counteract this epidemic and slow down the unfortunate projections that have been cast upon the region. The key to this as well is education of the young adults as consumption patterns established here may be continued well into adult life.

**Objective:** The general objectives of this study are: **(1)** To add to the existing research information on adolescents. **(2)** To examine whether or not eating practices of adolescents are in accordance with their level of nutritional knowledge. **(3)**To recommend some interventions strategies to increase healthy eating among adolescents.

**Design:** The Study was conducted on 70 adolescents within the age ranges of 13-17 of four educational institutions namely, SERVOL, Bishop's Girls, Asja Boys and Upper Level Educational Institute which were subsequently sub-divided into two groups, SERVOL and Other which consisted of the other three secondary schools. Questionnaires were administered and their nutritional knowledge as well as consumption patterns was assessed.

**Results:** It was found that the adolescents within the confines of this study all had a grasp on what was healthy and what was not, participants were able to distinguish the terms healthy

eating, a balanced diet, fast foods as well as an unhealthy diet. It was seen as well that family and adults were associated with healthy eating and peer association was linked to eating of fast food. The factors of expense and taste were listed among other things as reasons why adolescents do not consume vegetables and fruits.

**Conclusion:** It was concluded that adolescents had the correct perceptions about healthy eating; however several barriers were indicated in accordance with the views of the adolescents. Some of these barriers were, taste, expense, availability, educational empowerment to make informed choices as well as their busy schedules. Peers and family members were seen as major influences in food choices.