

FACTORS AFFECTING THE FOOD BUYING PRACTICES AMONG SENIOR CITIZENS.

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Background: The food purchase decisions of senior citizens living in Tunapuna and environs were examined using a senior's group which meets monthly in the Tunapuna Presbyterian Church.

Objective: The aims were to discover the general shopping behaviour of the elderly, to identify the factors that influence their food buying practices, to understand the relationship between age, gender and income level on the factors affecting food purchase and to understand how the elderly compensate for low income in food purchase

Design: A sample of around one hundred (100) persons was taken from the members of the Aramalaya Golden Years Fellowship. Membership is open to anyone living in Tunapuna and environs or who attend worship in Tunapuna and are sixty (60) years and over. This group was intended to represent mobile adults over the age of sixty who are regularly involved in activities outside of their homes. All members of the Aramalaya Golden Years Fellowship who consented to take part in the project were given a questionnaire and asked to complete it

Result: The literature found that food availability, nutrition knowledge and income were the key factors in the food purchase decisions made by the elderly. The information obtained through a questionnaire suggested that many elderly persons purchase most of their food themselves and that supermarkets were the most popular method of obtaining food supplies. Most of the elderly participants purchase their food supplies once a month. Purchasing prepared food was unpopular among this group and most of the prepared food was bought in the supermarket /market, followed by Creole and Chinese restaurants and then fast food outlets.

Conclusion: Across age, gender and income, price was the most significant factor in the purchasing decisions made by the elderly. Nutrition followed in the general population followed closely by freshness/ expiry dates. Even though only nineteen respondents stated that they had to

do without an item in the last year, of those who did, almost all stated that the price was the reason.