

ABSTRACT

Dietary intakes of adult Jamaicans of African origin and associations with body mass index.

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The dietary habits of the adult Jamaican population has not been studied systematically to date in Jamaica. A reproducible and valid food frequency questionnaire was developed to determine dietary patterns and intakes of specific nutrients associated with the risk of chronic diseases of obesity, diabetes and hypertension.

The study was conducted in Spanish Town, St. Catherine. The sample was selected by probability proportionate to size. A total of 2100 subjects were enrolled: however, the first 1000 subjects were used in this study of whom 924 subjects had complete dietary data. The overall response rate was 62%.

The sample consisted of 561 females (60.7%) and 363 males (30.3%). The mean age of men (46.1 ± 14.5) and women (46.0 ± 13.3) were similar. Although food composition of the diet was similar between the sexes, men had higher intakes of all food groups, with the exception of food from animals. The mean daily energy intake was 2906 ± 1028 kcal in men and 2327 ± 929 kcal in women. Macronutrient composition of the diet was similar in men and women except that women consumed significantly higher proportion of energy from

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saturated fat and had a lower polyunsaturated to saturated fat ratio than males. On average, the percent contribution of the macronutrients to energy intake approximated the WHO (1990) population goals: however, at the 50th percentile and above, both males and females exceeded the reference for fat intake.

Females were more at risk for obesity than males. However, the dietary factors of fat or carbohydrate did not explain obesity; protein as a predictor of BMI is likely to be a proxy for an unmeasured factor associated with weight gain, for example, higher social class. Findings from the study showed 14.3% of variability in obesity was explained by being female, dietary fibre and protein intake, union status and cigarette smoking.

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