

Contribution of Daily Diet for Non-communicable Disease Risk Factors: A Pilot Study Conducted in Minuwangoda Divisional Secretariat Division, Sri Lanka

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Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and hypertension are growing public health concerns in Sri Lanka, closely linked to dietary habits. The Ministry of Health Sri Lanka implemented a traffic light colour coding system to reduce NCDs risk factors such as salt, fat, and sugar. This pilot study aimed at examining the daily consumption of salt, sugar, and oil against recommended intakes in Minuwangoda Divisional Secretariat. A cross-sectional survey from March to October 2023 involved 54 randomly selected families, using interviewer-administered questionnaires and 24-hour dietary recalls. Results showed that 94.4% of households used coconut oil for cooking, reflecting traditional dietary patterns. Despite its cultural significance, the highly saturated fatty acid content of coconut oil raises cardiovascular risk concerns. World Health Organization (WHO) recommends fat intake not exceeds 30% of total energy, while actual fat intake averaged 44.17 g (19.63% of total energy), below this limit. Average salt intake was 6.5 g per day, exceeding the WHO's 5 g recommendation ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that excess salt contributes to hypertension and related NCDs. Conversely, free sugar intake averaged 17 g daily, below Sri Lanka's Ministry of Health limit of 25 g (6 teaspoons), indicating free sugar is less likely to be a major NCD risk factor in this population. However, Sri Lankans typically having a carbohydrate rich diet, sugar derived from that main diet was not included. These findings highlight that traditional diets combined with excessive salt intake still as a public health challenge and underscore the need for culturally sensitive nutrition education and policies focused on reducing salt and promoting healthier fats to reduce NCD risk. Further research on the national level is needed to validate these findings and guide broader NCD prevention efforts.

Keywords: Non-communicable diseases, Oil, Salt, Sugar

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