

Patterns and Practices of Food Consumption according to Ayurveda and Sri Lankan Traditional Medicine among School Children

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Nonhealthy patterns and practices of food consumption are proven as a major health determinant in increasing of noncommunicable diseases. Modern scientific findings provide evidence for benefits of some food consumption methods mentioned in Ayurveda and Sri Lankan traditional medicine. Hence, implementing healthy food consumption practices per Ayurveda and Sri Lankan traditional medicine are important. This was a cross-sectional study conducted to determine the prevalence of these practices among the school children. Consented 147 volunteer students from a selected school in Bandaragama, Kaluthara district within the age of 14-15 years were given an interviewer administered questionnaire based on the recommended and non recommended patterns and practices of food consumption mentioned in Ayurveda and Sri Lankan traditional medical texts. Prevalence of certain food consumption patterns and practices were calculated as a percentage. Prevalence of non-healthy food patterns of skipping meals (48.29%), suppressing hunger (54.2%) and thirst (4.89%), natural milk consumption substituted by formulated milk and artificial drinks (88.43%), consumption of tea (6.85%) and coffee (10.28%) within short gaps from main meals, inadequate liquid consumption (74.56%), disregarding the relationship between seasonal changes and food consumption (94.56%), ignoring post-consumptive etiquettes based on different facts (4.09%- 98.76%) and paying less attention to food while consuming meals (36.05%) were major contradictory patterns and practices that came in to light. Almost all the participants were unaware about the *Guru* (hardly digestible) and *Laghu* (easily digestible) properties of the food. The survey concluded that there exist a considerable range of non healthy food consumption patterns and practices in relation to Ayurveda medicine among the sample. Further, studies with a wider scale of population within different socio demographic status are important to find reasons behind these unhealthy practices. It will help to improve the health status by applying appropriate lifestyle modifications and healthy practices for the prevention of higher incidences of noncommunicable diseases.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Dietary practices, Food, Patterns, Sri Lanka