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### Impact of fast food on nutritional status of adolescents

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#### Abstract

People are increasingly being warned against the ill effects of fast food and the potential damage they pose to the human health. The effects of fast food include nutritional, obesity, increased cholesterol levels, cardiac problems and other threatening health hazards.

**Keywords:** Adolescents, fast food, nutritional status, obesity

#### Introduction

Fast food needs no introduction in today's world of speed and leisure. Everyone from a 2 year old grandchild to a 70 year old grandpa seems to be enjoying it at every chance they get and what wrong? It's delicious, it's filling, is really affordable, and readily available just any time of the day, being only a drive or phone call away. Adolescents generally consume fast food in high amount due to faulty food habits. This is found more in students living away from homes in hostels. Fast food is all good in taste, except that it is not nutritionally balanced and, therefore, unhealthy in the long run if consumed on a regular basis. It is designed to promote consumption of the maximum number of calories in the minimum amount of time. Fast food is generally high energy density and they also lack in the nutrients. It is loaded with calories from refined sugar and fats (especially, the artery-clogging saturated and hydrogenated fats, which are repeatedly reheated to high temperatures for frying purpose).

It is also very high in sodium, coming from common salt and other additives. On top of all this, fast food is deficient in dietary fiber and essential micro-nutrients like vitamins and minerals. Adolescence is a period of marked changes, a period during which the individual rapidly undergoes a series of sequential physical and mental changes that transform a small child into a young adult. The dramatic physical changes include increase in height and weight, deposition and redistribution of fat, increase in lean body mass and development of various organs. Nutritional status is the condition of the health of an individual influenced by the utilization of nutrients. Eating frequent fast food meals causes teens and young adults to gain more weight and face an increased risk of developing insulin resistance. Fast food increased the risk for many serious health problems including high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes. But that's not the end, it's just the beginning – Not many people who love fast food are ready to acknowledge that obesity is not simply an eyesore – it is major risk factor for a large number of readily disease like hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol, heart diseases, and even many types of cancers.

Recent scientific studies have shown that high calorie foods rich in fats, refined sugar and salt could reconfigure the hormones in the body in such a way that they make you crave for such foods and always leave you asking for more. The situation is worse in case of children who from a very young age get hooked on fast food. Making them change their food habits from fatty and sweet foods and develop a taste for health promoting fruits and vegetables is a task easier said than done. Such children would grow up to be obese adults who have never felt the advantages of being a healthy weight.

#### Materials and Methods

Respondents were randomly selected from four coaching institutes of Kota city which were also randomly selected. A pre-designed and pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect the information regarding the nutritional and health status of adolescent girls and boys who consumed fast food.

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The questionnaire was prepared which was divided under two main sections-

Section (a) consisted of general information regarding age, sex, coaching institute, family, height, weight of the respondents.

Section (b) consisted of information regarding nutrition and health status and quantity of food consumed every week.

**Results and Discussion**

The major finding of the study were –

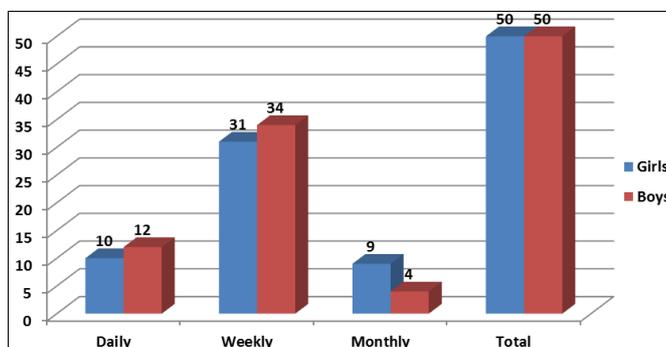
It was observed that the mean weight of the students in the age group of 16-18 years was higher in comparison to the standard weight. The percentage of students having normal appetite was 65 percent while the percentage of students having anorexia was 35 percent.

**Table 1:** Distribution of the surveyed student according to the consumption of the foods

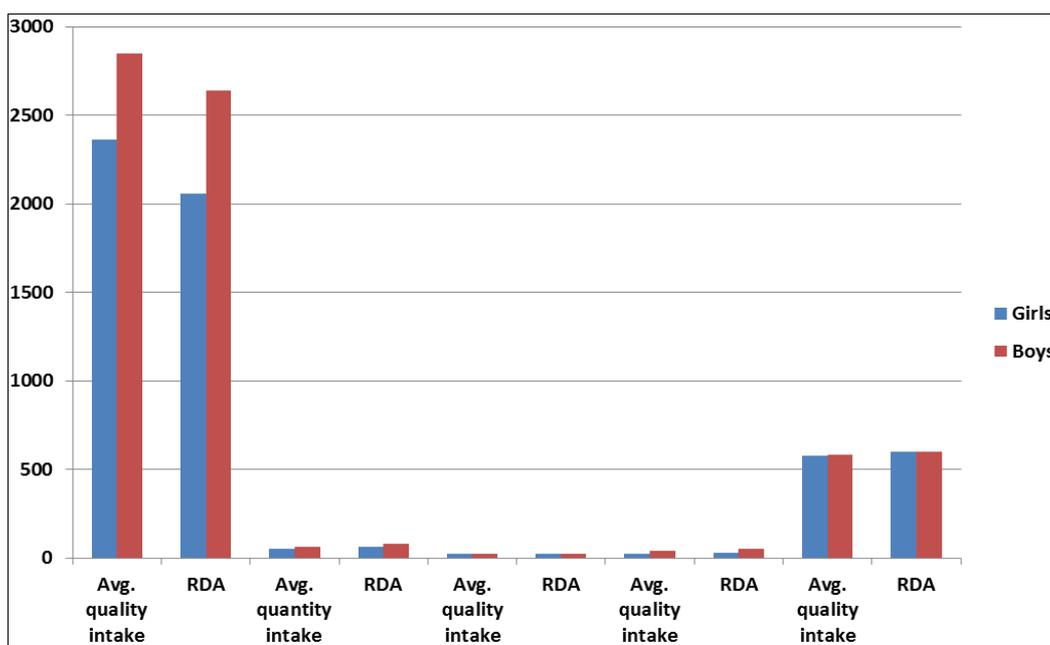
Gender	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Total
Girls	10	31	9	50
Boys	12	34	4	50
Total	22	65	13	100

It is clear from the table above that 20 percent girls and 24 percents boys were consuming fast food on a regular basis and 62 percent girls and 68 percent boys were consuming fast food weekly while 18 percent girls and 8 percent boys were

consuming fast food monthly. The average consumption of energy for all students was more than the RDA. So they suffered from various deficiencies and obesity. This may be due to poor eating habits, lack of knowledge and socio-economics status. The mean intake of protein was lower than the respective RDA. The mean iron consumption was lower and vitamin A consumption was almost adequate. It was concluded that the diet consumed by both adolescent girls and boys was deficient in vitamin, iron and protein while energy and fat consumption was higher in both the groups who consumed fast food. Thu they were suffering from obesity.



**Fig 1:** The mean iron consumption was lower and vitamin A consumption was almost adequate



**Fig 2:** The average consumption of energy for all students was more than the RDA

**Table 2:** Show the details of Energy Protein Fat Iron and Vitamin A

Gender	Energy (kcal / d)		Protein (gm/d)		Fat (gm / d)		Iron (mg / d)		Vitamin A (mcg / g)	
	Avg. quality intake	RDA	Avg. quantity intake	RDA	Avg. quality intake	RDA	Avg. quality intake	RDA	Avg. quality intake	RDA
Girls	2360.2	2060	51.6	63	24.2	22	26.4	30	580.0	600
Boys	2850.4	2640	64.8	78	26.4	22	42.8	50	582.2	600

**Conclusion**

Adolescents generally consumed fast foods in high amount due to faulty food habits. Both girls and boys were having more weight in comparison to the standard weight as fast food are generally high energy density. It may be in important part of many complex problems due to their limited nutritional value and high levels of fat, sugar and salt. Fast food can increase the risk for many serious health problems including high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes.

So fast food as it is consumed is not a part of a healthy life style. It results in pilling up of unused empty calories in the body, which get stored as body fat – till one day you look in the mirror and realize that your great figure has been replaced by this creature the mirror.

To start with, a simple change that one could make is to successively reduce the frequency of eating fast food and eat more frequently home cooked food, with plenty of fresh food and vegetables.

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