

HEALTHY EATING STATUS OF EARLY ADOLESCENTS LIVING IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

Parnnarat Sangperm

Department of Pediatric Nursing, Faculty of Nursing, Mahidol University,

E-mail: nspcc@mahidol.ac.th

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Practicing healthy eating during childhood and adolescence period can help preventing chronically illnesses. However, many previous research studies show that adolescents do not engage in healthy eating behavior. This study aimed to examine healthy eating status of early adolescents living in Bangkok, Thailand. One hundred and ninety one students studying in grade 7-9 (mean age = 13.33 ± 0.91) in six secondary schools provided information on a 3-day food diary. Data from food diary were coded and analyzed using INMUCAL program to retrieve all nutrients consumed. The Healthy Eating Index (HEI) was calculated based on the Nutrition Flag and Dietary Reference Intake (DRI) for Thai 2003 as references. The possible score ranged between 0 and 100 for the total HEI and between 0 and 10 for each component. The total HEI score was categorized into three nutritional status groups: poor diet status (less than 50), need improvement status (between 50 and 80), and good diet status (more than 80). The mean HEI score was 45.99 ± 7.90 in adolescent boys and 45.76 ± 6.85 in adolescent girls. The study findings revealed that as much as 76.7% of girls and 68.4% of boys had a poor diet status. Moreover, none of the adolescents reached the good diet status. For each HEI components, more than 80% of boys and girls had a poor diet status in consuming less fruits and vegetables and consuming more fat, cholesterol, and salt. However, almost 90% of boys and 94% of girls had a good diet status in consuming more meat. These results suggested that nutritional champagne or strategies should be developed to provide information for encouraging early adolescents to practice more healthy eating behavior.

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