TRENDS IN FOOD, ENERGY AND NUTRIENT INTAKES OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, PHILIPPINES, 2003-2013: DID THEIR DIETS IMPROVE AFTER 10 YEARS?

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BACKGROUND

Healthy eating particularly among young children is important for proper growth and development and to prevent various health conditions later in life.

OBJECTIVE

This study examined time trends in the food, energy and nutrient intakes of Filipino preschool children, aged six months to five years old over the 10-year period from three national Food Consumption Surveys done by DOST-FNRI in 2003, 2008 and 2013.

METHODOLOGY

The mothers or caregivers were asked to recall the foods consumed by pre-schoolers for two non-consecutive days using the 24-hour food recall method. A total of 3,405 pre-schoolers in 2003, 4,055 in 2008 and 2,717 in 2013 were included in the study. Means, percentages, confidence intervals and standard errors were computed using SPSS and STATA programs.

RESULTS

The total food intakes of pre-schoolers showed a declining trend over the 10-year period. By food group, a downward trend was observed for intakes of cereals and products, starchy roots and tubers, sugars and syrups, fats and oils, fish and products, vegetables and fruits. Meanwhile, an upward trend was noted for their consumption of meat and products, poultry, eggs, dried beans, nuts and seeds, and condiments and spices over the three surveys. On the other hand, their intake of milk and milk products and beverages increased significantly from 2008 to 2013. Their mean energy intake significantly dropped from 2003 to 2008 and picked up by 2013. Protein and iron intakes decreased between 2003 and 2008 and minimally increased in 2013. Over the past decade, increases were seen in their mean vitamin A and calcium intakes but decreases were noted for vitamin C, thiamin, riboflavin and niacin.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

There is a decline in both quantity and quality of pre-schoolers’ diet over the 10-year period. Initiatives to improve infant and young child feeding, macro-and-micro nutrient supplementation, food fortification, and proper care and hygiene practices should be promoted.