

CONSUMPTION PATTERN OF READY TO EAT FOODS AMONG URBAN SCHOOL CHILDREN IN NEPAL AND ITS IMPACT ON THE NUTRITIONAL STATUS.
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In the recent scenario of convenience foods rapidly replacing the conventional foods by children in Nepal, the present investigation was undertaken with the objective of finding the consumption pattern of Ready to Eat Foods (REFs) and its impact on physical growth and nutrient density of meal of school children residing in urban Kathmandu. Sample comprised 610 children (276 girls and 334 boys) from upper middle income group. A list of ready to eat foods was prepared for the study. Mothers, children and teachers were interviewed and observed for data collection. Investigation was carried in two phases - namely prevalence and indepth study.

The finding revealed the prevalence of REF consumption in all children but with varying amounts and types. The average daily intake of REF was 1.9 times in frequency and 125 g in amount. REFs contributed 20% of the total calorie intake per day. REFs were preferred over traditional snacks by majority. Their consumption increased mainly due to convenience, taste and affordability. Mother was the chief introducer of most of the REFs. REF consumption had positive relationship with percapita income (t -ratio=2.36; $P<.05$) and mother,s education (t -ratio=3.18; $P<.05$). In the indepth study height, weight, protein and calorie intake of REF consuming children was found to be satisfactory. Thus REF consumption did not influence the anthropometric indices and, calorie and protein density of meal. However, a decrease in the consumption of pulses, green leafy vegetables, fruits and milk and milk products was observed. The group difference was statistically significant for fruits (F -ratio=3.69; $P<.05$) and milk and milk products (F -ratio=4.63; $P<.05$). The food consumption behaviour of school children in Nepal indicated an increasing trend in the intake of ready to eat foods leading to the decreased intake of vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron rich foods.