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Feeding Habits of Children under Age of Five in Rural Area of Sudan: An Overview about the Nutritional Situation

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Abstract

Early introduction of complementary foods in the developing countries is associated with an increased risk of diarrhoea due to poor sanitary conditions and lower quality of supplements. In Sudan the most supplementary food offered to children are cereal-based stuffs which are naturally deficient in protein constituents. A survey was done in a central rural area of Sudan to study the feeding habits of children under age of five and related information about breast feeding, drinking water and complementary foods during breast feeding for the infants. Moreover, the weaning parameters as well as the most common food consumed by the children under age of five have been detected. The type of diet consumed by children under question was determined by using the Recall method. The results discovered the importance of early and continuous breast feeding for infants of the studied area. 60.7% of the infants were breast-fed for two years and only 10% of them were using bottle-feeding. Moreover, it was recorded that a higher share of the children (97.3%) were taking complementary food during the period of breast feeding while 12% of the infants started such complementary feeding programme earlier (< 4 month of age) and 57.3% involved in the range between four to six month old. The assessment of the weaning regime was found to be sudden in about 23.3% of the infant community. Imposing of such sudden weaning without gradual introduction of complementary food was reported as one of the terrible traditional practices affecting the child health in various parts of Sudan. Most of the children were found consuming cereal-based diet and due to the low socio-economic status large number of families consumes on average 0.25 kg of meat for preparing meals for the whole family. All the children examined were found consuming dried okra (*Abelmoschus esculentus* (L.) Moench) in their meals during three consecutive days.

Keywords: Breast feeding, cereal-based foods, children under 5, complementary foods, okra, Sudan