

Chipper Preferences in Snack and Mealtime: Erroneous Eating Behaviors Versus Healthfulness Nutrition of Youth Sport Participants and their Families

Maria Luigia Pallotta*

Department of Medicine and Health Sciences, V.Tiberio, University of Molise, Campobasso, Italy

***Corresponding Author:** Maria Luigia Pallotta, Department of Medicine and Health Sciences, V.Tiberio, University of Molise, Campobasso, Italy.

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Abstract

Youth sports occur primarily through the complex and repeated interactions of multiple individuals in the youth sport ecosystem. Notwithstanding their endorsement, little is known about the repercussion of them on nutritional intake of competitors and their parentage network. Parents' decisions around the foods and beverages offered for team snacks are influenced by cost, convenience, children's preferences, social norms, and meal timing. Italian children frequently exceed the Dietary Guidelines for Italian/(European)'s recommendation to limit added sugars to the impact of games and practices on mealtime within rec league youth sports. A total of 500 surveys were completed by participants (470 males and 30 females from Southern Italy, in Euro-Mediterranean region). Given that sport is used as a medium to connect with the participants aged 6 - 10 through healthy lifestyle and it is a potent means for preventing obesity during infancy where may be an opportune time to begin obesity prevention; moreover it is a critical period of rapid growth and developmental plasticity with long-lasting metabolic and behavioral consequences, we think that this work could be useful for future investigation and for a correct nutritional education in youth athletes.

Keywords: *Youth Sports; Youth Athletes; Beverage and Snack Choices; Mealtime Preference*

Introduction

Youth sports are adult-organized sports programs for children and youth, typically between the ages of 7 and 18 years which have designated coaches, organized practices, and scheduled competitions [1]. Youth sports occur primarily through the complex and repeated interactions of multiple individuals in the youth sport ecosystem. Among the many individuals who engage with youth in sport, parents have arguably the most significant impact on athletes' early experiences. As parents continue to invest a growing percentage of resources into their children's sport participation, what constitutes "appropriate" and "optimal" parent involvement has become an important area of debate among researchers, stakeholders, coaches, and parents [2]. Youth sport should be designed in such a way that athletes can develop both physically and socially. Along with refining and becoming more efficient with a number of motor skills, youth athletes can develop skills like leadership, responsibility, and teamwork, as well as gain a greater understanding of the value of hard work [3]. Notwithstanding their endorsement, little is known about the repercussion of them on nutritional intake of competitors and their parentage network. The commitment of time and other family resources, the impact on routines and scheduling, and the foods available at games and practices all influence eating behaviors of youth sport participants and their families. Parents' decisions around the foods and beverages offered for team snacks are influenced by cost, convenience, children's preferences, social norms, and meal timing [4]. Italian children frequently exceed the Dietary Guidelines for Italian/(European)'s recommendation to limit added sugars to the impact of games and practices on mealtime within rec league youth sports.

All recreation leagues are for school-based teams only and are managed by the Youth Sports.

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Methods and Procedures

Participants, recruitment and randomization.

Data were collected regarding

Recruitment: Participants were recruited at youth rec fields in five Elementary Schools in Molise and Calabria South Italy, in Euro-Mediterranean region. Those who identified as a parent or guardian of a child aged 6 - 10 years playing on a soccer, football, or flag-football team, and who were fluent in Italian, were invited to participate in the study. Participants were made aware of the study requirements through consent forms detailing collection procedures and protection of confidential information. Protocols were approved by the University of Molise human subjects review board.

Survey design: Participants completed a 17-question survey designed to assess food and beverage choices for team snacks, factors that influenced team snack choices, mealtime behaviors, and factors that influenced mealtime behaviors on game and practice days. The surveys were completed on paper, took about seven minutes to complete, and members of the research team were available to clarify questions as needed. Prior to use for this study, the survey was content validated by Nutritional Biochemistry Academic Board at Dept of Medicine and Health Sciences (i.e. Prof ML Pallotta e colleagues), Unimol. Face validation was performed with parents at a randomly chosen soccer practice prior to data collection. Parents were asked to list their team snack options when it is their turn to provide the team snack. In separate questions, parents were asked to indicate which factors influence their team snack and mealtime preferences. Expenditure, advantage, nourishment, taste, and child’s preference were provided as feasible feedback. Parents were asked about the relevance and salubriousness of team snacks, and how often their family love dinner outside of the home on game and habit evenings.

Data analysis and statistics: Descriptive analysis of survey responses were performed using Excel. Frequency analyses were conducted for survey items related to perceptions of team snacks provided at youth rec sporting events, team snack and beverage choices, factors influencing team snack and dinner choices, and household mealtime behaviors.

Results

A total of 500 surveys were completed by participants [470 males (260 from Molise and 210 from Calabria) and 30 females (10 from Molise and 20 from Calabria), see table 1]. Most survey respondents were males, and the parent of a child who played soccer. Households had an average of 1.5 children. The mean age of the youth sport participants was about 7 years old. The length of the average sporting activity was 45 minutes.

Partecipants	Males	Females	Age
	Students	Students	
Molise’s School	260	10	7
Bojano	115	4	8
Carovilli	42	2	9
Palata	34	3	6
Frosolone	69	1	6
	Students	Students	
Calabria’s School	210	20	7
Tropea	85	3	6
Scilla	25	11	8
Lamezia Terme	58	4	6
Isola CapoRizzuto	62	2	10
Total	470	30	7

Table 1: Data on students partecipants this research’s project.

Beverage	n = 500	Snack	n = 500
	Students' Choices		Students' choices
Juice	146.	Pizza	128.
Fruit Drinks	28.	Dairy (Cheese sticks + Yogurt)	4.
Orange juice	128.		
Milk	4.	Fruit snacks/Gummies	14.
Water	8.	Chips	39.
Floved Water	2.	Popcorn	13.
Sparling water	3	Sandwiches	122.
Sports Drink	139.	Cupcakes	36.
Lemonade	14.	Crackers	45.
Coke	13.	Snack Cakes	46.
The	15.	Chocolate bars	53
Total	500		500

Table 2: Reported students (both males and females) beverage and snack choices.

Beverage choices for Sex	Males	Females	Snack Choices for Sex
Students			
Juice	139/123	7/5	Pizza
Fruit Drinks	25/0	3/2	Dairy (cheese sticks+Yogurt)
Orange juice	124/0	4/2	
Milk	0/14	4/0	Fruit snacks/ Gummies
Water	6/37	2/2	Chips
Floved Water	0/12	2/1	Popcorn
Sparling Water	2/116	1/6	Sandwiches
Sports Drink	137/30	2/6	Cupcakes
Lemonade	11/43	3/2	Crackers
Coke	12/45	1/1	Snack Cakes
The	13/50	2/3	Chocolate bars
Totale	470	30	

Table 3: Reported students beverage and snack choices for sex (i.e. first number beverage, second number snack).

Given that sport is used as a medium to connect with the participants aged 6 - 10 through healthy lifestyle and it is a potent mean for preventing obesity during infancy. where may be an opportune time to begin obesity prevention; moreover it is a critical period of rapid growth and developmental plasticity with long-lasting metabolic and behavioral consequences.

The Youth Sports Game promote a healthy lifestyles and popularise all ten sports (footballs, street basketball, handball, volleyball, beach volleyball, tennis, table tennis, chess, dodgeball, and athletics), as well as educating about sustainability. Thus next step of this research will be try to spread all the ten sports disciplines among the participants and also provide students and their families with a session dedicated to a healthier approach to the nutrition of young growing athletes in conjunction with training.

Conclusion

Regional differences in per capita income are exceptionally large in Southern Italy (Europe Mediterranean Area) where there is a huge literature dealing with the so-called “Questione Meridionale” the social, economic and cultural backwardness of Southern Italy [5]. Thus in this first step we have analyzed the choices both in beverages and in snacks of 500 students of two different places (Molise and Calabria). The preferences were different also respect to sex where the females participants would seem healthier when compared to males. Next step of this research (phase 2) will be able to better highlight these preliminary results and direct young sportsmen and sportswomen and their family to greater awareness of eating habits in order to achieve healthy eating behaviors and respect for the environment.

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