

# Junk Food Consumption and Lifestyle Diseases Among School Students: A Case Study of Baker Memorial GHSS, Kottayam

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**Abstract** Adolescents are increasingly consuming junk food, often driven by convenience, taste, and peer influence. This study examines the prevalence of junk food consumption and its association with lifestyle diseases among students at Baker Memorial GHSS, Kottayam. Through surveys, observations, and basic statistical analysis, the study found that regular consumption of junk food is common and contributes to issues such as fatigue, lack of concentration, and early signs of lifestyle-related illnesses. The findings emphasize the urgent need for nutritional awareness and healthier food policies in schools.

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Junk Food, Lifestyle Diseases, Dietary Habits, School Health, Nutrition Education

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical phase for physical and cognitive development. The dietary choices made during this stage can have long-lasting effects on health. In recent years, there has been a notable shift in the eating patterns of adolescents, marked by increased consumption of junk food. These foods, often high in sugar, saturated fats, and additives, have become staples in the diet of many students due to their accessibility, affordability, and taste. This trend has coincided with the rising prevalence of lifestyle diseases among young individuals, including obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and cardiovascular disorders. Schools, being a primary environment for students, play a crucial role in influencing eating behaviors. This study was conducted to explore junk food consumption patterns among students at Baker Memorial GHSS, Kottayam, and to assess the health implications associated with these dietary habits.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To assess the frequency and type of junk food consumption among students. - To identify the factors influencing junk food preferences. - To evaluate students' awareness of the health effects of junk food. - To examine the link between junk food consumption and lifestyle-related health symptoms. - To propose strategies to reduce junk food intake and promote healthy eating habits in schools.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This descriptive study involved 50 students from Classes 8 and 9 at Baker Memorial GHSS, Kottayam. Data collection was done using a structured questionnaire administered in both English and Malayalam. The questions covered demographic details, frequency and reasons for junk food consumption, awareness of health impacts, and experienced health issues. Observations and informal interviews with students also supported the data collection process. The data were analyzed using percentage distribution and visualized through bar diagrams and pie charts prepared with Microsoft Excel.

## 4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

**4.1 Frequency of Junk Food Consumption** Out of 50 students: - 24% consumed junk food daily - 36% consumed it 3-4 times a week - 28% consumed it 1-2 times a week - 12% rarely consumed junk food

This indicates that 60% of students consume junk food more than three times a week.

**4.2 Reasons for Junk Food Preference** Students cited the following reasons: - Taste: 60% - Convenience:

44% - Easy availability at school: 40% - Peer influence: 32% - Advertisements and media: 20%

Taste and convenience were the most dominant factors.

4.3 Awareness of Health Issues - 50% were aware that junk food causes obesity - 30% linked it to diabetes - 24% knew it could lead to high blood pressure - 36% reported awareness of digestive issues - 20% were unaware of any health consequences

4.4 Health Effects Reported Students reported the following issues after frequent junk food consumption: - Fatigue and sluggishness: 44% - Lack of concentration: 36% - Digestive issues: 30% - No noticeable effect: 24%

These findings show that junk food consumption is not only common but also impacts both physical and cognitive well-being.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The findings from Baker Memorial GHSS reflect a broader national trend of increased junk food consumption among adolescents. Students tend to prefer junk food for its taste and availability, often overlooking the nutritional drawbacks. The observed health issues, such as fatigue and reduced concentration, highlight the short-term effects of poor diet, while the limited awareness of long-term health risks is concerning. Despite partial awareness, behavior change remains minimal, suggesting the need for more impactful intervention strategies.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that junk food consumption is prevalent among students and contributes to early signs of lifestyle-related diseases. Although some students are aware of the associated health risks, this does not significantly influence their food choices. Therefore, there is an urgent need to promote nutritional awareness and healthy eating behaviors among students.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools should limit the sale of junk food in canteens and nearby stalls. - Include nutrition education in the school curriculum. - Conduct regular health awareness

programs involving parents and teachers. - Encourage the consumption of homemade and healthy snacks. - Involve students in health clubs and peer-led awareness initiatives.

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