

## **Dietary patterns and dental caries in nursery school children in Nairobi, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

Objective: To determine the dietary patterns and the prevalence of dental caries among nursery school children in Nairobi. Design: A cross-sectional study. Setting: Nursery schools in Nairobi, Kenya . Subjects: Three hundred and four nursery school-children (149 males and 155 females) aged 3-5 years were assessed in 1997. Results: There was a high consumption of fruits, vegetables and milk on a daily basis. There was also a high consumption of snacks both at home and at school. About 96% of the children had been breastfed, while 41 % had been bottle-fed. The prevalence of dental caries was high at 63.5% and a mean decayed, missing and filled teeth index (dmft) of 2.95, with the component comprising 96% of the total dmft. Only 1.3% of the children had filled teeth. Increasing age was the most predictive factor in dental caries. Conclusion: The high consumption of refined foods and snacks, as well as the high prevalence of dental caries raises a strong public health concern. It is recommended that dietary counseling and preventive oral health programmes should be initiated and the already existing ones strengthened and incorporated in primary healthcare programmes. There is also need for policy makers to come up with guidelines on advertisements promoting cariogenic snacks.