

Yakovlev T., Pratheepkumar V.
DIETARY PATTERNS AMONG FOREIGN STUDENTS IN BELARUS

Tutor: senior lecturer Tsimberova E.I.
Department of General Hygiene
Belarusian State Medical University, Minsk

Relevance. Studying foreign student's dietary habits offers insight into their nutritional status, highlighting the impact of cultural differences and dietary preferences on their health and academic performance. Foreign students' dining habits and reliance on outside food can help understand the impact of cultural transitions on their health and well-being.

Aim: the study aims to evaluate food safety, hygiene, meal frequency, dietary types, identify nutrition-related health symptoms, and provide recommendations.

Materials and methods. A survey was conducted among foreign medical students from various years and universities in Belarus, to gather information about their food and water consumption patterns. The survey had questionnaires such as frequency of meals they consume on a regular university Day, Type of Diet, How often they eat from outside, Experience of food poisoning (nausea, vomiting, Diarrhea) from outside, Water consumption, quantity of water consumption per day. More than 10 articles from Pub Med and Google Scholar released in the time between 2019 and 2024 have been analyzed.

Results and their discussion. A survey of 63 foreign students from Minsk, Grodno, Vitebsk, Brest and Gomel were participated. From them 39 (67.9%) consume two meals, 23 (36.5%) consume three meals and 1 (1.6%) consume more the three meals during university day and they it highlights potential areas of concern regarding the nutritional adequacy and energy levels of these students. This pattern may also reflect a need for greater awareness of proper meal planning and nutrition among university populations, as consuming fewer meals could impact academic performance and overall health. But they mentioned during weekends they have high chance to eat three proper meals per day. They have different and mixed type meal preparation methods according their free time. 15 (23.8%) students eat from the canteen/cafe/restaurant almost everyday, 31 (49.2%) eat outside sometimes during the week, 40 (71.4%) sometimes prepare their own food at home, 35 (55.6%) sometimes cook food together with a friend/roommate. When they eat from outside 22 (34.9%) maybe once, 14 (22.2%) few times and 2 (3.2 %) many times experienced food poisoning (nausea, vomiting, Diarrhea). 57 (90.5%) Students felt dizziness, weakness when not taking food on time. Method of water consume varied by direct from the tap, tap water after boiling, using water filter and bottled water. 31 (49.2%) uses water filter, 27 (42.9%) drink from bottled water, 4 (6.3%) uses tap water after boiling and 1 (1.6%) drinks direct from tap. And quantity of water consumption per day varied 4 (6.3%) less than 1L, 40 (63.5%) between 1-2L, 15 (23.8%) between 2-3L, and 4 (6.3%) more than 3L. They mentioned during winter their water consumption was very low compared to other seasons.

Conclusion. Most students (67.9%) consume two meals daily, causing nutritional concerns and dizziness. Insufficient meals can affect focus and academic performance. External sources can lead to food poisoning and safety issues, highlighting the need for improved educational programs. The majority of participants (43%-50%) prefer using water filters and bottled water for hydration, with a significant reliance on filtered water, suggesting seasonal variations in consumption habits, with a notable decline in daily water intake during winter months. Implement nutrition education workshops, enhance cafeteria menus, offer cooking classes, and encourage students to keep healthy snacks on hand for balanced meals and energy will help them to improve their healthy diet and nutrition.