Unhealthy food and beverage practices in everyday life in Ghanaian cities

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- Prevalence of overweight/obesity in urban areas is high especially amongst women (49.0% - DHS, 2014).

- Evidence of dietary transition: nearly one-third of population eating unhealthy food & beverages and >two-thirds eating animal products (systematic review and meta analysis of 47 studies- Rousham et al., 2019).

- NCDs recognised as pressing public health concern as >40% of deaths

- National policy emphasise interventions that respect the cultural context.
Aims of this study?

To explore how unhealthy dietary practices fit in everyday life in Ghanaian cities

To identify context-relevant interventions and policy to promote healthier diets
What we did…

Two Ghanaian cities:

**Accra** (James Town)
**Ho** (Ho-Dome)

**Total sample = 301**
Adolescents and adults aged ≥13 years (♂ and ♀) based on a quota sampling method (gender, age, BMI, occupation and SES)
What we did...

Qualitative 24hr recall interviews, noting:

- All **food & drink consumed** in/outside home in last 24hrs
- **Time of day** of the eating episode- *periodicity*
- **How long** an eating episode lasts- *tempo*
- **Who** participants eat with and **where**- *synchronisation*

Nutrient and energy content of 138 foods were then assessed using food composition tables and then nutrient profiling methods
What we did to assess healthiness of foods…

• Individual food’s energy density (kcal/100g) and nutrient density/100kcal were assessed.

• A nutrient density score per food was calculated:
  • 11 nutrients to encourage (protein, fibre, vitamins A, C, E and iron, calcium, potassium and magnesium, folate and zinc) and
  • 3 nutrients to limit (saturated fat, added sugars, sodium) used

• West African Food Composition Table was used (2012; 2016)

• If unavailable food/nutrients, then we used others:
  • 2008 Tanzania Food Composition Table; 2018 Kenya Food Composition Table; 7th Edition of McCance Widdowson UK Food Composition Table (UFCT) and the Ghana RIING database
Five measures of healthiness of food and beverages

Energy dense, nutrient poor foods

‘Unhealthy foods’

Energy Dense (>225 kcals/100g)
Nutrient Poor
(<10% for nutrient rich index score)

Energy dense, nutrient rich foods

Energy Dense (>225 kcals/100g)
Nutrient Rich
(≥10% for nutrient rich index score)

Fried foods

Sugar sweetened beverages

Sweet foods
What did we find?

Ghana

- Energy dense nutrient rich: 89.4%
- Fried foods: 66.8%
- Energy dense nutrient poor: 55.8%
- Sweet foods: 38.5%
- Sweetened beverages: 36.2%
A structured meal pattern around 3 main meals a day:

- People eat an average of 3.3 times/day in Ghana

The day starts early:

- Breakfast (7-8am), lunch (12-1pm) and evening (5-7pm).
- Some snacking in-between meals.
How long do people eat for? (Tempo)

Very quick /quick eating episodes in Ghana

- ≥60mins: 3.2%
- 30-59mins: 9.7%
- 10-29mins: 47%
- <10mins: 40.1%

(n=301)
Over 80% of people ate at home BUT more than 40% of people ate alone
Recommendations for interventions

The home environment and families are an important setting to promoting healthy diets. Action around enhancing access to healthier foods could encourage eating at home.

Low socioeconomic groups are more likely to consume unhealthy foods. Actions such as subsidies on healthier foods and taxes on unhealthy foods could promote healthier food choices.

Eating with friends is often associated with unhealthy eating practices. Awareness about eating well when with friends could be emphasized as part of interventions.
Thank you