ADHERENCE TO SCHOOL LUNCH VERSUS FOOD CHOICES OF STUDENTS IN A BRAZILIAN CITY

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The School Feeding National Program aims to promote the formation of healthy eating habits, and meet the nutritional needs of students during school hours. The objective of this work was to evaluate the adherence to the school feeding program for elementary school students (3 to 9 years) of medium and large size units of the municipal education of Guariba, São Paulo state, Brazil, in 2011. Data were collected by adopting the questionnaire prepared by the Supply School Department, of the State Education Department. A sample of 341 students (54.25% girls and 45.75% boys), aged between 8 and 15 years. Of the total, 84.32% of the girls and 89.10% of the boys responded to consume school meals. Considering the frequent consumption (4 to 5 days/week), less than 40% (39.74% of the girls and 33.09% of the boys) can be classified as supporters of feeding offered by the school. When asked about their food choices, the students who did not consume the meals cited most frequently: crackers (43.87%); snacks (41.11%); candies (19.37%) and soft drinks (15.81%). These data are alarming since the favorite foods to replace school meals are known to have low nutritional value, and involve additional costs to their families, being noteworthy that school meals distributed are free in the country. These results will subsidize corrective actions to broaden the adhesion to the school feeding program, as is the case of nutritional education that can involve students and also relatives for the adoption of healthy eating practices.