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www.iuns-icn2017.com info@iuns-icn2017.com



## Reference

**Title:** Caregivers' perceptions of snacks and factors influencing their use for young child feeding in urban Nepal

**Authors:** Nisha Sharma<sup>1</sup>, Alissa M Pries<sup>2,3</sup>, Atul Upadhyay<sup>1</sup>, Anushka Thapa<sup>1</sup>, Sonia Thebe<sup>1</sup>, Suzanne Filteau<sup>3</sup>, Elaine Ferguson<sup>3</sup>

**Affiliations:** <sup>1</sup>Helen Keller International, Nepal. <sup>2</sup>Helen Keller International, USA. <sup>3</sup>London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK.

## Background and Objectives:

Ensuring a nutritious diet during the complementary feeding period is vital for preventing childhood malnutrition. Prior research in Kathmandu Valley found high consumption rates of nutrient-poor snack foods among children 12-23 months of age. This qualitative study was conducted to elicit Nepali caregivers' perceptions of snack foods and beverages and factors influencing their feeding decisions to help understand why caregivers chose to feed their toddlers these foods.

## Methods:

Seven facilitated discussions and participatory exercises were conducted with 32 primary caregivers of children 12-23 months of age in purposively sampled areas of Kathmandu Valley. Focus groups were stratified by caregiver type (mother of grandmother) and socio economic status (SES) (low or middle/high). Discussions were guided by a facilitator, and participatory exercises included: 1) free-listing of foods and beverages consumed by children as snacks, 2) categorization into similar food groups, and 3) ranking of snacks according to perceived healthiness, convenience, cost, and child preference.

## Results:

1. Perceived health and nutritional benefits of foods/beverages were the most common reasons for caregivers' choices of snacks for their young children.
2. Fruits, eggs and milk were considered nutritious while 'market foods', such as instant noodles and chips, were considered 'junk foods' and not healthy for children.
3. Despite this distinction, caregivers reported feeding these less healthy foods if their child demanded them.
4. Commercial foods, such as chocolate, fruit drinks, and biscuits/cookies were considered healthy by caregivers.
5. Convenience to prepare, acceptance by children, and the socio-economic status influenced the caregiver's choice of commercial snacks fed to children

## Conclusions:

While caregivers reported health/nutrition benefits influencing their choices of snacks, a child's preferences and caregiver's economic status also guided their decisions. These findings suggest future research is needed to develop snack options that are nutrient-rich, inexpensive, and appealing to young children.

## Keywords:

Child feeding, health, nutrition, perception

## Conflict of Interest:

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

## Further Collaborators:

