

## Diet pattern in the Seychelles

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Diet data were obtained from a standardized questionnaire administered personally to all 1081 participants to the Cardiovascular Diseases Survey. Most results are presented above (see Tables 48–50).

*Meal frequencies.* Lunch and dinner are the two most consumed meals. Only 44% of subjects take breakfast. People preferred taking a mid-morning snack, especially women. Most subjects reported making their own meals while more obese subjects reported buying shop foods for their meals.

*Oils and fats.* More than 80% of all subjects used the cheapest locally available oil for cooking. It is an imported vegetable oil suspected to contain a high proportion of saturated oils. Only a very small percentage of subjects (< 8%) reported using polyunsaturated oils for cooking. Coconut oil consumption is very low. Traditionally, it was used more frequently, but nowadays it is used only in homes that have no access to a fridge. Most subjects reported using margarine rather than butter to spread on bread. These margarines, from vegetable or animal origin, in both hard and soft types, contain a high saturated fatty acid proportion (between 31% and 39%). Polyunsaturated margarines are being consumed by a very small minority owing to their higher price.

*Fish and meat.* Fish consumption is still very popular amongst all subjects. Three quarters of subjects reported eating fish at lunch and at dinner-time. Meat is consumed only once a week, usually at weekends, by the majority of subjects. About 50% of all subjects reported trimming the fat off the meat before consumption. This pattern of fish and meat consumption is supported by available

data collected in 1984, which put fish consumption between 167–219 g per head and per day and meat consumption at 20 g, although it is felt that more people are seeking to eat more meat nowadays.

*Eggs and milk.* Egg and milk consumption is low: most subjects reported taking eggs less than once a week and milk is only taken with beverages rather than on its own. Powdered, whole milk seems to be the milk of choice.

*Fruit and vegetables.* Less than 50% of all subjects reported eating fruit daily. The same applied to vegetables. Traditionally, the local starchy fruit and roots was consumed in larger quantities and more frequently. They have now been largely replaced by white rice and pasta. Although widely available in Seychelles, both local fruit and vegetable (rich in fiber) are expensive on the market and it is felt that people tend to underrate these local products as a measure of sophistication.

*Sugars and snacks.* About 60% of subjects take sugar in their beverages. About one third of all subjects reported drinking daily sugary beverages such as lemonades. About one third of subjects reported taking fried snacks daily. Such sugary and fried snacks are now cheap and readily available, especially in town where they will be a major part of snacks at breaktimes and at lunch times for many workers.

*Conclusion.* In order to ensure a healthy diet, high fish consumption should be maintained and fruit and vegetable consumption increased. Advice should be given to encourage people to vary the types of fats and oils used.