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# HEALTH AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF 8-12 YEAR OLD CHILDREN STUDYING IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS OF DISTRICT SRINAGAR OF KASHMIR VALLEY

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**ABSTRACT**
A study was conducted on the health and nutritional status of children in the age group 8-12 years studying in Schools of District Srinagar of Kashmir valley. Most of the respondents were from middle class economic group which represents the majority of population in Jammu and Kashmir. The mean height and weight was recorded less than the standard. Clinical features and personal hygiene of majority of respondents were normal. The intake of protein and fat was more than the standard but the calorie intake, calcium intake and iron intake was less. It seems that children of Kashmir valley are moving towards unhealthy dietary habits and lifestyle, which in turn will affect health status of these children in future. Promoting healthy lifestyle and eating habits should be given a priority in school health programs.

*Keywords: Health, Nutrition, Lifestyle, Physical Activity*

**INTRODUCTION**
In the school age years, children experience tremendous cognitive, emotional, and social growth and development. Assessment of nutritional status in the pediatric population is useful to estimate growth patterns and identify signs and symptoms associated with malnutrition or excessive nutritional intake. Nutritional status is determined from a nutritional assessment of anthropometric, clinical, dietary and socioeconomic effects. Each of these components reflects a child's nutrient requirements for optimal health and nutritional status (Mahan & Escott-Stump, 2000). Determining nutritional status can lead to early detection of nutritional deficiencies that can lead to increased morbidity and mortality. Early nutritional support can improve nutritional status, minimizing the chances for innocuous problems becoming more serious. Nutritional assessment should be a routine procedure for people of all ages and including young children demonstrates a preventive stance (Christiaensen and Alderman, 2001).
Malnutrition is a major public health problem and accounts for about half of all child deaths worldwide (UNICEF, 2004). About 150 million children in developing countries are still malnourished and more than half of underweight children live in South East Asia Region (SEAR). The high levels of under nutrition in children in South Asia pose a major challenge for child survival and development. Besides poverty, there are other factors that directly or indirectly affect the nutritional status of children (Christiaensen and Alderman, 2001). Therefore, a nutritional assessment should be conducted on children so that their nutrition status, in turn, their health status can be identified (Mascarenhas et al., 1998). Current nutrition research studies reveal a paucity of research on nutritional status of children in the age group of 8-12 years belonging to Kashmir. In order to determine if children of the age group 8-12 years studying in Model School, University of Kashmir, are getting proper nutrition and have adequate nutritional status, a nutritional assessment reviewing anthropometric measurements, clinical examination.