Abstract

Adherence to the Updated Healthy Eating Guidelines by Breastfeeding Women †

Ying Jin 1, Jane Coad 2* and Louise Brough 2,*

1 School of Health Sciences, College of Health, Massey University, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand; y.jin@massey.ac.nz
2 School of Food and Advanced Technology, College of Sciences, Massey University, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand; j.coad@massey.ac.nz
* Correspondence: l.brough@massey.ac.nz
† Presented at the Nutrition Society of New Zealand Annual Conference, Online, 2–3 December 2021.

Abstract: Optimal dietary intakes are essential for the health of both breastfeeding women and their infants. Few recent dietary intake data exist concerning this group in New Zealand. This study aimed to determine the adherence to national dietary recommendations of breastfeeding women living in New Zealand. A cohort of breastfeeding women residing in the Palmerston North area was enrolled in the longitudinal follow-up Mother and Infant Nutrition Investigation study. Seventy-six women completed a weighed four-day diet diary at three months postpartum. Maternal demographic information was collected via a self-administered online questionnaire. The number of servings consumed for each food group was calculated based on the revised Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults (2020). All data were analysed using IBM SPSS version 20. Overall, 25% of women met the recommended number of servings (RNS) for fruits (≥ 2 servings/day), and none met the RNS for vegetables (≥ 7.5 servings/day). Only 5% of women reached the RNS for grain foods (≥ 9 servings/day), 34% met the RNS for meat and eggs (≥ 2.5 servings/day), and 13% met the RNS for milk and milk products including plant-based products (≥ 2.5 servings/day). In total, 49% of women met the RNS for one food group, but none of the women met the recommendations for all food groups. Based on independent t tests, women who had tertiary qualifications consumed a higher number of servings of grain foods (≥ 9 servings/day), 34% met the RNS for meat and eggs (≥ 2.5 servings/day), and 13% met the RNS for milk and milk products including plant-based products (≥ 2.5 servings/day). In total, 49% of women met the RNS for one food group, but none of the women met the recommendations for all food groups. Based on independent t tests, women who had tertiary qualifications consumed a higher number of servings of grain foods (p = 0.001) and vegetables (p = 0.010) compared with those without tertiary education. Pearson correlation showed the number of servings consumed in the meat and eggs was positively correlated with the number of servings of vegetables (r = 0.350, p = 0.02). This research shows a low adherence to the current national dietary guidelines among this cohort. Future research is required to identify the barriers to healthy eating and develop effective initiatives to encourage and support breastfeeding women to achieve healthy eating behaviours.

Keywords: eating and activity guidelines; diet; breastfeeding; New Zealand

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Y.J., L.B. and J.C.; methodology, Y.J., L.B. and J.C.; formal analysis, Y.J. and L.B.; data curation, Y.J.; writing—original draft preparation, Y.J.; writing—review and editing, Y.J., L.B. and J.C.; supervision, L.B. and J.C.; project administration, Y.J.; funding acquisition, L.B. and J.C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by Massey University Research Fund.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the New Zealand Health and Disability Ethics Committee (reference:15/NTA/172, December 2015).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.
Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.