

## **Whole grain cereals and health: knowledge, attitudes and practices of Sri Lankan adults**

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Whole grain (WG) cereals are recognized sources of bioactive compounds and regular consumption is associated with risk reduction of a number of non-communicable diseases. Little is known about Sri Lankan consumer knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) on use of whole grain cereals. The aim of this study was to determine the levels of KAP of urban and rural adults regarding WG consumption and health. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to gather information. Preliminary market surveys and focus group discussions were conducted to design the survey questionnaire that comprised of sections regarding knowledge, attitudes and practices. Pre-tested interviewer-administered questionnaire was used. Three hundred adults participated in the study representing urban and rural sectors in Sri Lanka. More than half of urban respondents had a good level of knowledge on WG cereals compared to those of rural (30%). Majority of rural respondents (69%) had positive attitudes towards WG consumption ( $p < 0.05$ ). Respondents from both sectors showed poor level of practices. Ability of identifying WG and the frequency of WG consumption were reported low among Sri Lankan adults. Majority of adults rated WG as more natural, nutritious and healthy compared to refined cereals. However, respondents demonstrated poor knowledge and practice levels but positive attitudes regarding WG consumption. Rural adults, though they have poor knowledge on WG consumption showed higher positive attitude level than those of urban. The findings of this study suggest the need of strengthening the public nutrition education activities in Sri Lanka to improve the knowledge on WG cereals, and conducting awareness programmes to increase their consumption.

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