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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Assessing the nutritional information for children younger than two years old available on popular websites



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KEYWORDS

Internet;
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Abstract

Objective: To analyze whether the information found on popular Internet sites are in accordance with the steps recommended by the Food Guide for Children Younger than Two Years of the Ministry of Health (2010).

Methods: Descriptive/comparative study, carried out between August and October 2014, which carried out a search for popular sites (for lay people) in Portuguese, containing information on nutrition of children younger than two years. The Google search engine was used. These findings were compared with the Food Guide for Children Younger than Two Years of the Ministry of Health (2010). It was verified whether the information shown on the websites was in accordance with the Guide.

Results: A total of 50 sites were analyzed, including blogs, food company websites and websites specialized in child nutrition. Only 10% of those pages correctly showed every step of the Food Guide. The recommendations were: exclusive breastfeeding up to six months of life (80%); complementary feeding from six months of life (36%); baby food consistency according to the guide (48%); encouraging the consumption of fruits and vegetables daily (60%). Regarding the complementary feeding safety and hygiene, 26% contained correct information. Only 36% correctly warned about which foods should be avoided in the first years of life.

Conclusions: The information found on the sites is largely in disagreement with the Ministry of Health recommendations, which can lead to misconceptions in the nutritional care of the children younger than two years.

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Internet;
Nutrição da criança;
Guias alimentares

Avaliação das informações nutricionais referentes às crianças de até dois anos disponíveis em sites populares**Resumo**

Objetivo: Analisar se as informações veiculadas em sites populares estão de acordo com os passos recomendados no Guia Alimentar para Crianças Menores de Dois Anos do Ministério da Saúde (2010).

Métodos: Estudo descritivo/comparativo, executado entre agosto e outubro de 2014, no qual foi feita uma busca por sites populares (para leigos) na língua portuguesa que continham informações sobre a alimentação de crianças menores de dois anos. A ferramenta de busca usada foi o Google. As informações encontradas foram comparadas com o Guia Alimentar para Crianças Menores de Dois Anos do Ministério da Saúde (2010). Foi verificado nos sites se a informação apresentada estava de acordo com o Guia.

Resultados: Foram analisados 50 sites, entre os quais blogs, sites de empresas alimentícias e sites especializados em nutrição infantil. Apenas 10% dessas páginas apresentaram corretamente todos os passos do Guia Alimentar. As recomendações foram: aleitamento materno exclusivo até o sexto mês (80%); alimentação complementar a partir dos 6 meses de vida (36%); consistência da papa salgada de acordo com o Guia (48%); incentivo ao consumo de frutas, verduras e legumes diariamente (60%). Sobre a segurança e a higiene da alimentação complementar, 26% continham informações corretas. Somente 36% alertavam corretamente sobre quais alimentos devem ser evitados nos primeiros anos de vida.

Conclusões: As informações contidas nos sites apresentam, em grande parte, discordância com o que é preconizado pelo Ministério da Saúde, o que pode acarretar equívocos no cuidado nutricional com os menores de dois anos.

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Introduction

The early years of a child's life, especially the first two, are characterized by a rapid growth and great evolution in the development process. This is a vital period for the implementation of good eating practices, given that it is in this phase that the abilities to begin digestion of breast milk and other foods are acquired and important physiological changes regarding intake self-control take place, which may determine the food standard in adulthood.^{1,2}

In Brazil, over ten million users access health websites regularly. A study conducted in 2011 revealed that most people who search the Internet for health information do so for their own health or that of their relatives. Women represent the majority of users.³ Currently, the Internet is used by three billion people worldwide, according to a study published in November 2014 by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and publicized in several countries by the United Nations (UN). The use of the Internet has been steadily growing worldwide; from 2013 to 2014, it increased by 6.6%. Such use has doubled from 2009 to 2014 in developing countries.⁴ In the Information and Communication Technologies Development Index (IDI), which ranks countries considering their level of access to these technologies and the use of Internet, Brazil has advanced from the 67th position in 2012 to the 65th in 2013, reaching a rating of 5.5. According to that document, in 2013, 51.6% of all Brazilians used the Internet; 48.8% of homes in the country had a computer, and of those, 42.4% had Internet access. It is estimated that 40 million new wireless broadband Internet connections were made in 2013.⁴ Regarding the profile of

Internet users, most of them referred its use for learning and education purposes; the proportion of women who access the Internet for such information is greater than men.⁵

The Ministry of Health recommends exclusive breastfeeding up to 6 months; from that age onwards, the introduction of complementary feeding is indicated. In the exclusive breastfeeding period, offering teas, juices, and water is unnecessary, since breast milk is a complete food and the normal newborn is born with relatively high hydration levels.⁶ In addition, offering fluids in the bottle can harm the baby's sucking ability, reduce the intake of breast milk, and decrease their willingness to suckle again on the breast.^{1,6,7} From the sixth month onwards, although breast milk continues to feed and protect infants against diseases and is an important source of calories and nutrients, exclusive breastfeeding is no longer able to meet all their nutritional needs and energy; thus, the introduction of new foods is justified.^{6,7} The early introduction of low nutritional value and high-calorie foods in the first years of life and the reduction of exclusive breastfeeding are factors that contribute to the emergence of allergic processes, eating disorders, anemia, and overweight, in addition to decreasing the protective ability of the immune system.^{2,8}

Despite the growing access of mothers, fathers, and caregivers to the Internet for information on breastfeeding and complementary feeding, resorting to popular websites that have no scientific content, there are still few Brazilian studies that address this theme. A search in the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) with the use of descriptors "Internet" and "complementary feeding" retrieved only one reference.⁹ Thus, the present study aimed to analyze

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