

Food consumption of postmenopausal women in times of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic: a longitudinal study

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Postmenopausal women had a higher consumption of sweet foods and sugar-sweetened beverages and a lower consumption of milk, dairy products, and processed foods during the pandemic than during the baseline period.

BACKGROUND

- Studying the dietary habits and symptoms of postmenopausal women during situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic is important to mitigate long-term post-pandemic health problems.

Objective: To compare eating habits and menopausal symptoms of postmenopausal women before and during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

METHODS

- Longitudinal study (2018 - 2021) at one Climacteric Gynecology Outpatient Clinic in São Paulo;
- Sample: Women aged ≥ 40 years with postmenopausal diagnosis;
- Kupperman-Blatt Menopausal Index, Women's Health Questionnaire, 24-hour dietary recall, and Brazilian Food Insecurity Scale - short-form;
- Chi-square and Fisher's exact tests were used to assess differences between variables (before and during SARS-CoV-2 pandemic).

RESULTS

- Of the 274 participants enrolled at the baseline, 78 (28.5%) continued to participate in the survey during SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.



Table 1. Energy consumption by degree of food processing of postmenopausal women at the Climacteric Outpatient Clinic, University of São Paulo, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2018–2021

Food Consumption	Before Pandemic (n = 78)		During Pandemic (n = 78)		p*
	Average \pm SD	Median (Q1–Q3)	Average \pm SD	Median (Q1–Q3)	
Total energy (kcal)	1726,04 \pm 577	1802,81(1371,08-2156,35)	1541,28 \pm 604,07	1466,86 (1035,15-1918,58)	0,003
Degree of food processing (% of total daily energy intake)					
Culinary preparations	61,22 \pm 14,45	60,78 (53,01–72,3)	63,14 \pm 16,70	63,27 (51,81–74,60)	0,697
Processed foods	8,97 \pm 6,44	8,75 (3,33–13,50)	5,88 \pm 6,16	4,24 (0–9,71)	0,003
Ultra-processed foods	29,81 \pm 14,42	29,38 (19,78–40,15)	31,18 \pm 17,21	29,73 (18,29–41,77)	0,216
Healthy markers (g)					
Milk and plain yogurt	134.70 \pm 124	116.10 (6.95–213.81)	106.67 \pm 102.23	89 (2.99–168.9)	0,043
Sugar-sweetened beverages	63.21 \pm 81.68	29.93 (6.28–87.84)	66.99 \pm 83.88	29.28 (0–89.8)	0,007
Sweet foods	184.15 \pm 138.65	157.32 (62.51–273.34)	190.72 \pm 227.02	128.12 (13.67–286.44)	0,001

RESULTS CONTINUED



40% presented some degree of food insecurity

- Another healthy markers evaluated: fruits (p=0.658), vegetables (p=0.392), and legumes (p=0.0,63);
- Another unhealthy markers evaluated: sausages (p=0.082) and fast food and ready meals (p=0.385)

CONCLUSIONS

- Higher consumption of sweet foods and beverages and lower consumption of milk and processed foods during the pandemic, compared to before the pandemic. A decrease in energy and macronutrient consumption is pointed out, which may be related to the participants' food insecurity.
- These findings can contribute to improved healthcare planning for postmenopausal women to prevent and treat menopausal symptoms.

ADDITIONAL KEY INFORMATION

Conflicts of Interest: No
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