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Hormonal and behavioral aspects that may explain the higher consumption of ultra-processed foods in female adolescents

Aspectos hormonais e comportamentais que podem explicar o maior consumo de alimentos ultraprocessados em adolescentes

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Comment on "Prevalence and Factors Associated with the Consumption of Ultra-Processed Foods among School-Age Adolescents in Montes Claros, MG"

Dear Editor,

I read with great interest the article "Consumption of ultra-processed foods among adolescents in Montes Claros, Minas Gerais", which reported a high prevalence of ultra-processed food (UPF) intake among adolescents, with significantly higher consumption among women. This conclusion is highly relevant to public health and deserves further discussion.

Adolescent girls experience hormonal changes typical of puberty, including increased estrogen levels, associated with increased sensitivity to sweet tastes and a preference for palatable foods, as well as progesterone fluctuations, especially during the luteal phase of the menstrual cycle, which can increase appetite and cravings for energy-dense foods. In addition, hormones involved in the regulation of hunger and satiety, such as ghrelin, leptin, and insulin, can influence eating behavior and contribute to a higher consumption of UPF.

Social and behavioral factors are also relevant. Greater exposure to beauty standards and pressures on body image may predispose adolescents to disordered eating behaviors, including binge eating disorder, which is more prevalent among young women and is associated with excessive consumption of ultra-processed and sugary foods.

Understanding gender-related differences in food consumption is essential for the development of effective nutrition education strategies and health promotion policies targeting adolescents, especially women, in order to prevent chronic diseases and reduce UPF consumption in vulnerable populations.

Best regards,

Author's Contributions

We describe contributions to the papers using the taxonomy (CRediT) provide above: *Conceptualization; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing*: CFC Magalhães.

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