#### Review

## Traditional Dietary Assessment Tools Verses Technology-Based Methods in Children and Adolescence. An Updated Review

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Abstract. Dietary assessment in children is challenging for several reasons. In research, there are several challenges in the accurate assessment of diet and nutrition. This is an updated review that focuses on studies that evaluated the diet assessment methods in children. The aim of this review is to evaluate the most common traditional and technology-based tools that are used in children for dietary assessment implementation. Traditional diet assessment methods are available to assess children dietary intake in research, each one with different strengths and weaknesses. The most common dietary measures to assess children's diet are food frequency questionnaires, weighed food records, 24-hour recall and diet history interviews because they are valid accurate measures Recently, several technology-based tools have been introduced to provide a more accurate record of portion size using visualisations and to improve the participation response of traditional dietary surveys. These new measurement tools optimized to use on mobile phones and tablets, which makes it more accessible for participants. The development of technology-based dietary measures now allows for a detailed analysis of the whole diet on different days and at different times of the day with low-cost, precision and convenience to patients.

Key words: diet assessment, children, online diet assessment, diet records, food questionnaires

#### Introduction

Dietary assessment is challenging for several reasons. These reasons include the inherent errors created by measuring past and current food intake and the limited information available for nutrients available in reference databases (1). There is also the continued debate about whether dietary assessments should use self-reported data or objective biomarkers (2); there is not a consensus about this. However, the limitation of self-reported data is bias from participants, which can be eliminated by using dietary biomarkers (3). The ideal dietary assessment should be valid, reliable, appropriate for the target population and outcome of interest; practical to use, and have a low burden on participants during completion (4). Validity is defined as the degree of probability to which the tool measures what it claims to measure (5). Validity can be established by direct comparison of the assessment tool against an alternative gold standard method used to calculate the energy expenditure (4). The doubly labelled water (DLW) is the gold standard method to calculate the total energy expenditure in humans (6). Validity also includes providing an accurate assessment of food portion and amount.

Reliability is defined as the extent to which the tool yields the same results once repeated (5). The reliability of a dietary assessment can be established using test-retest reliability, comparing scores from two measurements, administered one week or more apart (7). The most common dietary measures to assess children's diet are food frequency questionnaires (FFQ), weighed food records, 24 hour recall and diet history interviews because they are valid accurate measures (8). Therefore, the present review focuses on studies that have evaluated traditional and technology-based dietary assessment tools that have been used in children.

#### Traditional dietary assessment tools in children

#### Food frequency questionnaires (FFQ)

FFQ are a self-reported method that explores the food intake frequency of commonly consumed foods and/or beverages; how often each type of food is consumed, the quantity of the food and the timing of each food and drink (9). FFQ consist of a specific list of different types of foods and beverages with specific categories to indicate each frequency of consumption over a period greater than 24 hours.

The validity and reproducibility of using FFQ to assess diet-disease relationships is well established against the gold standard DLW (10-13). Several studies have used FFQ to assess FS consumption in children aged six- to eight-year-old (14-16). However, a systematic review, which evaluated all studies that reported the reliability or validity of questionnaires in children, reported limitations related to FFQ because of their tendency to overestimate food intakes, the limited food lists, portion sizes, and recall bias (17). Fifteen cross-sectional studies were included in this systematic review and two studies only used FFQs with a reporting period of the previous 12 months. FFQ take less time to complete in children than 24hour recall and food records (18). FFQ take between 30 to 60 minutes to complete (19).

#### Weighed food records (WFR)

In this method, the participant is required to weigh each item of food and drink prior to consumption and the leftovers food (20). Participants receive detailed instructions on how to accurately weigh the food and beverages. Weighed records are collected for three days or more; seven days is usually considered the gold standard. One of the drawbacks of this method is the presence of a trained researcher in the household is required if working in a low- or middle-income country with low literacy levels (8, 21).

A systematic review that assessed the validity of different dietary assessment methods in children and adolescents (17) found that one of the included studies that used the WFRS as a dietary assessment method significantly under-reported energy intake by between 11% to 27% (20). A validation study compared concurrent estimates of total energy expenditure measured using a seven-day WFRs against the DLW gold standard in a study of children aged one and a half to four and half years (22). Similarly, in contrast, a second cross-sectional study that used WFRs to assess seven- to 18-year-old children for seven days showed that WFRs underestimated the food intake of adolescents (22).

Although WFRs have been used in children to assess sugar consumption in preschool children, it is an expensive method because of the weighing, and it is liable to misreporting (23, 24). For younger children aged one to four years WFRs provide the best estimate (25). The practical limitations related to the time taken to record, the need for the researcher to be present in some circumstances and the questions about validity and underreporting make WFRs less suitable dietary assessment method for some studies.

#### The 24- hour multiple pass recall (MPRs)

The MPRs method is a structured interview that captures all food and drinks consumed by participants in the past 24 hours. The steps involved in the interview to allow revisiting and checking dietary information usually refers to "Multiple pass". In the first pass, a quick list of foods consumed is obtained. Then, information about the time of the meals and the snacks consumed is collected in the second pass (8). The new multiple pass method developed in the late 1990 uses computerized data collection to produce an improved 24-hour dietary recall method (26).

The validity of the MRPs has been established for children based on their total energy expenditure against the DLW gold standard (27). A systematic review that compared the validity of different dietary assessment methods for estimating energy intakes by children aged four- to eleven-year-old found that the MPRs was the most valid method for reporting energy in children in this age group with accurate results (17). This systematic review suggested that MPRs includes weekdays and weekend days and should be conducted over at least a three-day period that using parents as reporters. The limitations of this review were its small sample size (24 children) and the recall bias that could result from prejudice of parents (17).

The findings of the study conducted by Jonson *et al* (1996) on the accuracy of the twenty-hour recall method for estimating the energy intake by 4–7 years old children showed that this method was easily applied, valuable, practical measure of energy intake (28). The MRPs method has been used in children to assess the sugar consumption (29, 30).

The disadvantages of MPRs include questions about the ability to estimate portion size. It is a researcher reported recorded method which makes it difficult to use at home over an extended period (8). There are some difficulties when using this method on large populations (31).

#### Estimated food records (EFR)

The EFR method is similar to the weighed food record method except for the estimation of the quantification of the foods and drink rather than being weighed (8). To calculate food and nutrient intake, the assessor converts the estimates of foods and drink into weights that can then be used. A series of questions at the end of each day records foods that are commonly eaten between mealtimes. The EFR booklet describes portion sizes (32).

A study was carried out by Chinnock (2006) to examine the validity of EFR using WFRs as the reference method for the determination of food consumption and nutrient intakes (32). The results showed that EFR was a valid method and comparable to WFRs. A cross-sectional study conducted in Western Sydney compared measurements of energy intake from a 3-day estimated food record and of total energy expenditure by the doubly labelled water (33). At the individual level, this study found that EFR lack precision but may be used for population surveys of energy intake in schoolchildren aged 6-9 years. However, Champagne *et al.* (1996) raised questions about EFR underreporting energy intake. The EFR has been used in children to assess sugar consumption (34). The limitations of EFR include the estimation of portion sizes, misreporting and the relatively high cost (8).

#### Diet History Interview (DHI)

The DHI method measures dietary intake using an open-ended detailed questionnaire and an interview. This classic diet history method was introduced by Burke between 1938 and 1947 in multiple clinical evaluations (35). The questionnaire is divided into sections to measure both food and drink consumed throughout the day. It includes detailed questions about the usual patterns of eating organized by meal; a list of foods and beverages for which information about usual frequency and amount are collected in a self-administered 3-day food record. The researcher who carries out the DHI should be trained and have detailed nutritional knowledge (36).

A school-based validation study was conducted to compare DHI with the gold standard DLW and found that the DHI was a valid method to assess the habitual food intake of adolescents (36). However, a study of eight to ten year old children found that the DHI had difficulty estimating the intake of certain foods such as sweets, chips, and popcorn (17, 37). Additionally, DHI is relatively costly and often not practical to administer in large scale population studies (38).

#### Technology-based dietary assessment methods

Nowadays, the use of technology-based methods has the potential to reach large populations and this is due to the accessibility of mobile devices and the high rates of use in both developed and developing countries. Technological based-dietary assessment methods reduce language barriers through use of images rather than verbal descriptions (39).

#### Interactive Portion Size Assessment System (IPSAS)

A meeting held at Newcastle University in December 2009 involving a number of investigators announced the development of new technologies for children's dietary assessment (40). These new novel methods were introduced to provide a more accurate record of portion size using visualisations and to improve the participation response of traditional dietary surveys. One of these technologies was the Interactive Portion Size Assessment System (IPSAS) developed for children and adolescents (41).

The IPSAS system displays food images that allow users to estimate the portion size and the amount of each food consumed by children. A validation of estimates of food made by children 4-16 years of IP-SAS against 4-day weighed intakes showed IPSAS is a valid alternative to the weighed food diary in this age group (41). However, the weight of food consumed was over-estimated by 2% on average by the children compared to 1% by their parents (40). Consequently, it is advised that the IPSAS tool be used with the parent for children aged 10 years or younger.

# Self-Completed Recall and Analysis of Nutrition (SRAN24).

The IPSAS has been developed further into a 24hour recall system called the Self Completed Recall and Analysis of Nutrition (SRAN24). The foods and drinks are selected from listed categories in the system and then assigned to the time of each meal with the portion size. SRAN24 is accepted by children because it is easy and quick to be completed while the accuracy and precision of this system is comparable to other computer-based systems used in dietary assessments (42). Subsequent studies have extended SRAN24 into INTAKE24 on participants aged 11-24 years (40).

#### INTAKE24

INTAKE24 is an online dietary assessment method, developed by the Newcastle study team to recall food intake over a 24-hour period in a Scottish food and nutrition survey (43). It was specifically designed to include the portion size of foods linked to the nutrient data bank (43). The INTAKE24 estimated portion size is shown using a series of over 3000 photographs of food (Figure 1) (44). Based on the portion sizes of foods reported in the UK National Diet and Nutrition Surveys (NDNS) these photographs have been developed (45). INTAKE24 has been validated in a validation study against 4-day weighed intakes (43, 44). Foods entered into the software programme are linked to the NDNS Nutrient Databank and all data are automatically coded. INTAKE24 was further developed to record missing food items, recipes and composite dishes using including a video tutorial (46).

The INTAKE24 has been also validated against interviewer-led multiple pass 24-hour recall. This validation study found that INTAKE24 was comparable to the interviewer-led multiple pass 24-hour recalls for people aged 11 -24 years old (43, 44). The daily energy, nutrient intakes and mean intakes reported using INTAKE24 were compared to those reported in the interviewer-led recall.

In 2016, a study aimed to examine the performance of INTAKE24 in young people and adults living in Scotland and the suitability of INTAKE24 as a system for collecting dietary information for Scottish Health Survey (SHeS) participants (46). This study found that INTAKE24 was a practical option to measure dietary intake in this younger population. INTAKE24 was further developed to recording of missing food items, recording of recipes for composite dishes and including a video tutorial. INTAKE24 is currently being used to explore the baseline dietary habits of 5–6-yearold children in Scotland as part of the Bedtime: Brush and Read Together, Sleep (BBaRTS) clinical trial (47). In this study, parents/guardians of children were asked to complete the INTAKE24 over 3 consecutive days.

The advantages of INTAKE24 are that it is a webbased and multiple pass recall methods; participants can complete the survey at any time and place and there is no need for the researcher to be present. It is currently optimized to use on mobile phones and tablets, which makes it more accessible for participants. INTAKE24 also reports the nutrient intakes and food groups with accuracy and precision. This method involves viewing photographs to estimate the portion size of the food and drinks. Furthermore, the survey is also quick to complete (43).

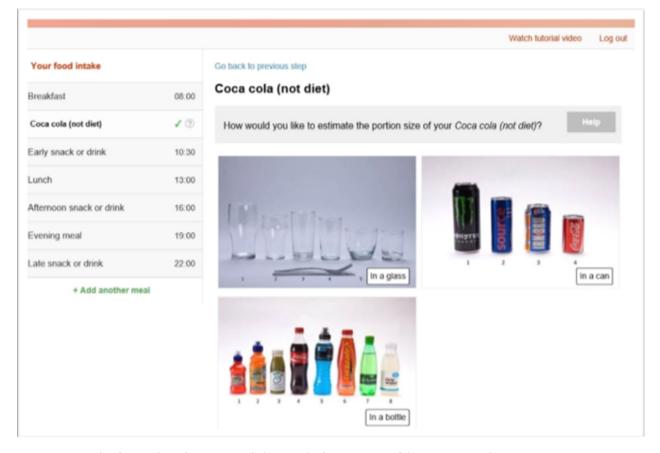


Figure 1. Example of screenshot of portion-sized photographs for estimation of the amount served in INTAKE24.

Recently, a study aimed to explore the accuracy and acceptability of Web-based dietary assessment surveys based on a progressive recall, where a participant is asked to record multiple recalls throughout a 24-hour period using the multiple-pass protocol and portion size estimation methods of the 24-hour recall (48). They found similar number of foods and similar amount of energy reported for other meals across the two methods. However, more than fifty percent of the respondents in this study preferred the 24-hour recall (INTAKE 24) method because it was easier to integrate into their daily routine. INTAKE 24 is more convenient in terms of fitting in with participants lifestyles (48). However, the INTAKE24 only available in English and the system is being translated into other languages for international use such as Arabic, Portuguese, and Danish (49). This process involves studying the food culture in these countries with external collaborators.

A systematic review aimed to provide an overview of technology-based dietary assessment methods that have been used in validation studies in comparison with plasma carotenoids as a biomarker of usual intake (39). They found that some of the technology-based dietary assessments can provide good estimates of carotenoid intake when compared to objective biomarkers of carotenoids. However, the correlations were moderate (39). Table 1 shows a summary of the most common traditional dietary assessment tools and compare it to the INTAKE24.

#### Conclusion

Assessment of diet in children is challenging and relied on their parents. Different factors depend on the selection of the diet assessment method. Several traditional diet assessment methods such as FFQ,

The traditional dietray assessment method	Technique	Advantages	Dissadvantages
Food frequency questionnaires (FFQ)	A specific list of different types of foods and beverages with specific categories to indicate each frequency of consumption over a period greater than 24 hours.	Valid and reproducible. Considered one of the most common methods used in children. Completed in short time.	Tendency to overestimate food intakes, the limited food lists, portion sizes, and recall bias.
Weighed food records (WFR)	The participant is required to weigh each item of food and drink prior to consumption and the leftovers food, (3- days, 7-days).	Valid and accurate .	This method needs time and a trained researcher. Considered expensive.
The 24- hour multiple pass recall (MPRs)	A structured interview that captures all food and drinks consumed by participants in the past 24 hours.	Valid, easily applied, valuable and a practical measure of energy intake.	Difficult to assess children in large population because its need a resercher to be present and record.
Estimated food records (EFR)	The participant is required to estimate the weight of each item of food and drink prior to consumption and the leftovers food.	Validated method.	Estimation of portion sizes, misreporting and the relatively high cost.
Diet History Interview (DHI)	An open-ended detailed questionnaire and an interview.	Validated method.	Difficulty estimating the intake of certain foods , it is relatively costly and often not practical to administer in large population.
The technology-based dietray	assessemnt method		
INTAKE24	An online dietary assessment method to recall food intake over a 24-hour period using pictures to estimate the portion size of foods and drinks.	Valid and reports the nutrient intakes with accuracy and precision. Easy to be used and accessible for participants. It is currently optimized to use on mobile phones and tablets.	Expensive for large population. Only availble in Enghlish ,Arabic, Portuguese, and Danish.

Table 1. A compartive assessment of most common tradictional dietary assessment methods to be used with children versus INTAKE24.

weighed food records, 24-hour recall and diet history interviews.

Recently, the introduction of technological-based dietary assessment methods have been more practical and convenient for participants. Participants can be complete online-dietary methods at times and places that are suitable for them. They also substantially reduce the cost of nutritional analysis and increase participants engagement. Technological-based dietary assessment methods may offer low-cost, low-burden alternatives for collecting dietary information. Acknowledgements: The author would like to thank Professor. Cynthia Pine and Dr. Vanessa Muirhead for reviewing a draft of this manuscript.

**Financial support:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency, commercial or not-for -profit sectors.

Conflict of interest: None.

Authorship: K.B was responsible for the entirety of this manuscript.

Ethical Standards Disclosure: Not applicable.

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