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FEEDING CHILDREN: MOTHER’S FEEDING DECISIONS AND THE DIETS OF THEIR CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO TWO YEARS

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Food Technology
Massey University

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ABSTRACT

This study examines mother's decision making about their young children's diets, as well as examining the diets of the children. Qualitative methods are used to study the women's decision making at a time when their children's diets are characterised by change. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain the perspective of mothers. Dietary information was collected using five day food records for a sample of thirty-three children under the age of two years. The dietary data is used for individual children to discuss feeding practices and reasons for these practices. On the whole the children's diets were found to be adequate in terms of the RNI, except for low intakes of vitamin E and iron among some of the children. The feeding practices were the result of an interaction between the mother and the child. The mother's decision about what food to offer the child took into account many factors. The women considered the effect of dietary practices on their child's health, but they also considered other aspects of child care and household management. The women's focus of concern changed in response to the immediate situation and broader contextual factors. They were actively learning about their child and applied the information they received from many sources to their own situation. The women's multiple concerns and their process of actively learning about their child would be best served with an active partnership approach to nutrition intervention.
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