

Level of food hygiene and knowledge attitudes and practices on food hygiene among food handlers , in school canteens in Colombo Municipal Council area
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In component one, the level of food hygiene was described. For the first component, 123 school canteens were studied using an observational check list. The level of food hygiene was satisfactory in 41.1 percent of canteens in government schools and in 83.3 percent of semi government and private schools. The environmental sanitation was satisfactory in 12.6 percent of canteens in government schools and in 91.7 percent of semi government and private schools, only 69.1 percent of government school canteens had water supply, In more than 83 percent of canteens in both canteens had water supply. In more than 83 percent of canteens in both categories, the food was displayed satisfactorily. In component two of the study , the knowledge, attitudes and practices of food handlers were assessed using an interviewer administered questionnaire and by direct observation using a checklist. The study demonstrated that over half (55.8 percent) of the food handlers had good knowledge regarding food hygiene and food borne diseases. The knowledge on food borne diseases was rather inadequate. Significantly (statistically) higher knowledge was observed with age more than 45 years, female sex and ability of food handlers to read and write in more than two languages, But knowledge didn't show any statistically significant difference between educational level and experience of food handler. Only 23.1 percent of food handlers knew about the School Canteen Policy. The practices were poor among 63.3 percent of food handlers. Only 32.7 percent have been educated on food safety. Large majority of food handlers were serving food bare handedly. Only 8 percent of food handlers used to wash hands with detergents before handling the food. All the canteens were supervised by both the Public Health Inspectors (PHH) and the school authorities. The frequency of supervising by PHH is not adequate. No canteens had H 800 forms. The food handlers have to be registered, educated and certificated. The Ministry of Education has to take actions to give tenders of canteens depending on the performance of previous year. H-800 forms should be maintained to all school canteens and legal action also should be taken whenever necessary. School authorities should take steps to educate not only the canteen management but the food handlers too regarding the School Canteen policy.