

Asian students change their eating patterns after living in the United States.

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OBJECTIVE: To collect information on changes in dietary patterns among Asian students before and after immigration to the United States. **DESIGN:** A questionnaire designed to collect information about background, changes in food habits, and frequency of food consumption from a 72-item food list was mailed to subjects.

SUBJECTS/SETTING: Potential participants were students of local universities and junior colleges who were born in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, or Korea and were aged 18 years or older. All subjects were required to have been residing in the United States for at least 3 months before the start of the study. Questionnaires were mailed to 120 potential participants. **STATISTICAL ANALYSIS:** Paired t tests were used to determine differences in eating patterns and frequency of food consumption of subjects before and after immigrating to the United States. **RESULTS:** Seventy-one questionnaires were returned. Because of missing information on 8 of these questionnaires, only 63 were used in the analysis, which gave a response rate of 53%. The number of students consuming only 2 meals per day increased significantly; 29 (46%) respondents skipped breakfast because of their school schedules. Despite no significant change in the frequency of snack consumption, a majority (n = 46; 73%) of the respondents were consuming more salty and sweet snack items. Subjects were eating out less often, but they were selecting more American-style fast foods when they did eat out. Significant increases were noted in consumption of fats/sweets, dairy products, and fruits, and significant decreases were noted in the consumption of meat/meat alternatives and vegetables after immigration to the United States.

APPLICATIONS/CONCLUSIONS: Results of this study could be useful to dietetics practitioners as they observe changes in dietary patterns of Asian immigrants. These health professionals can use this information to plan nutrition education programs for Asian groups so that they can make informed decisions in adapting to new eating patterns and make wise food choices in their new environment. It is important to help Asian immigrants retain healthful food habits from their original country and to encourage them to choose eating patterns of the new culture that are nutritionally sound.