

---

# Survey on Popular Food Items: Children Snacks

---

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

**Feb 2009**

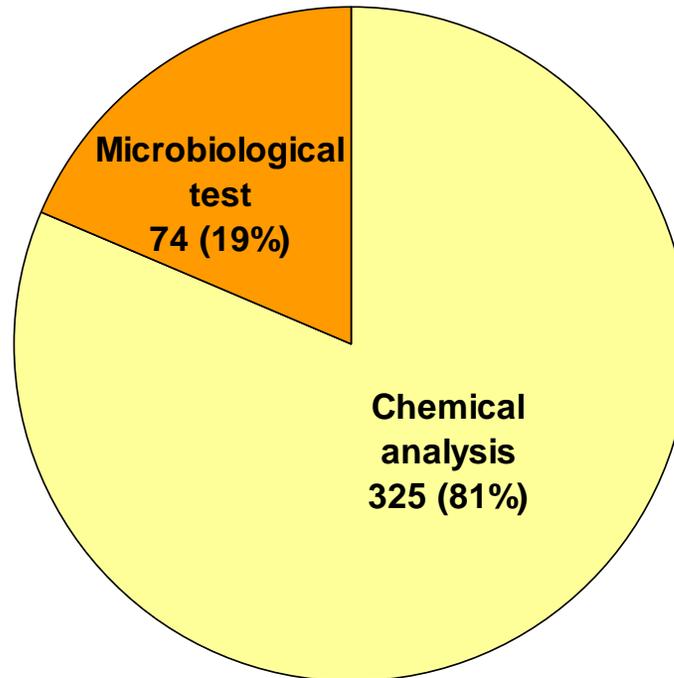
# Background

- Children snacks are popular in Hong Kong. They are tasteful, ready-to-eat and in great variety. Various kinds of children snacks can readily be bought from convenience stores, supermarkets, snack shops and vending machines. Therefore, their safety is a local concern.
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) recently conducted a survey on children snacks.
- Tests include microbiological testing and chemical analysis.



# Types of analysis

- Microbiological testing
- Chemical analysis



# Testing items

## Microbiological testing

- Includes total bacterial count, coliforms and pathogens such as *Bacillus cereus*, *Salmonella*, *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*.
- Some foods may be associated with unsatisfactory hygiene conditions:
  - Frozen confections are milk-based products. They are good media for microbial growth due to high nutrient value and almost neutral pH value.
  - Fish meat sausages has relative high content of water and nutrients and are stored at ambient temperature. They can be a good medium for microbial growth there was contamination before packaging.



# Testing items (cont'd)

## Chemical analysis

- (1) Includes colouring matters and sweeteners in sweets, snacks, beverages and frozen confections.
  - Children snacks are characterized by their attractive colour and taste. Hence, colouring matters and sweeteners are commonly added to achieve such effects.



# Testing items (cont'd)

## Chemical analysis

- (2) Include antioxidants in sweets and snacks and preservatives in sweets, dried fruit snacks and beverages.
  - Children snacks are usually pre-packaged. Antioxidants and/or preservatives may be added to prevent spoilage and discolouration after prolonged storage.



# Testing items (cont'd)

## Chemical analysis (3)

- (3) Includes aflatoxin in nuts as they may be contaminated naturally.
- (4) Also includes pesticides in dried fruits as their residues may be present.



# Types of food tested

- 399 samples of various children snacks were collected from over 170 retail outlets and food factories for testing.

Type of food	No. of samples	Percentage
Sweets	60	15%
Savouries and baking products	157	39%
Beverages	92	23%
Frozen confections	90	23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100%</b>

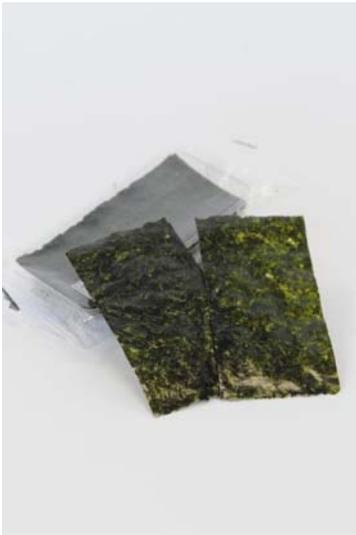
# Sweets

- Samples include chewing gum, chocolates, jellies and marshmallows.



# Savouries & baking products

- Samples include bean & peas, chips of corn, shrimp and potato, dried fruits, dried meat products, nuts, dried seafood products, crackers, cookies, cakes, seaweeds, fish meat sausages, popcorn, snack noodle and soft flour cake.



# Beverages

- Samples include soft drinks, fermented drinks and juice drinks.

# Frozen confections

- Samples include ice-cream (mochi), yogurt and popsicle.



# Overall results

- All 399 samples were satisfactory.

# Advice for trade

- Food manufacturers should :
  - use only permitted food additives
  - follow good manufacturing practice and use food additives appropriately
  - comply with legal requirements for manufacturing food products.
- Food retailers should purchase food from reliable sources and always comply with hygienic practices, e.g.
  - Store food in good condition
  - Do not sell food beyond their expiry dates



# Advice for consumers

- Buy food only from reliable licensed retail outlets.
- Note the food storage conditions. Do not purchase prepackaged foods which are opened or with the packages broken. Do not purchase not properly stored frozen confections.
- Pay attention to the expiry date of the pre-packaged food.
- Do not consume food of abnormal colour and taste.
- Maintain a balanced diet. Avoid eating snacks in excess as some of them are high in energy, sugar, fat and salt.