

## Healthy habits in school by Natalia Solano Pinto

School- based programs to prevent eating obesity and improve healthy habits include a range of strategies and preventive approaches combined with traditional psychoeducational strategies. Actions aimed at children and adolescents are developed in the educational field and are supported by school centers. Within these, the school canteens have special importance. At the end of 2009, the Spanish Agency for Consumer Affairs, Food Safety and Nutrition of the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality started the development of a Consensus document on food in schools, framed within the NAOS. This document provided theoretical knowledge and practical skills on health and nutrition through measures proposed for the organization of eating places, the establishment of criteria for the foods sold in vending machines, canteens and kiosks of educational centers. Although they were initially considered mere recommendations, nowadays these measures fell within the legal framework applicable to the educational centers in which general or special teaching plans are offered at a national level.

Among the healthy habits related to eating behaviors, the following stand out: family meals around the table; to avoid having meals in front of the television; to avoid having meals on the couch. The variables associated with weight gain in children are, among others: reduction of physical activity, lack of sleep, sedentary leisure time, inadequate eating habits and inappropriate sleep ranges for the age group.

From the point of view of nutrition and food safety, actions have also been implemented to curb the rise in obesity in the population at large, and particularly in children and adolescents. To this end, in 2005, the Spanish Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs drew up and launched the Strategy for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention (NAOS), which is currently managed by the Spanish Agency for Consumer Affairs, Food Safety and Nutrition (AECOSAN).

This agency carries out programs to prevent obesity and overweight in all levels of society, especially in children. In 2011, these recommendations and public health strategies were granted the status of a law when the Food Safety and Nutrition Law was drafted. AECOSAN currently contemplates actions in four different areas, according to the scope (family, community or school), and the focus of the action (the promotion of physical activity or healthy eating).

However, in Spain there is a few programs that included “body image” like factor to work. Although the majority of the actions performed do not contemplate the psychological variables, obesity has been associated with this type of variables, including body dissatisfaction.

In addition, some studies have found a relationship between body image and health care: body dissatisfaction may act as an indicator of a decrease in physical activity and in the consumption of fruits and vegetables; a positive body image increases the probability of developing health self-care habits, such as physical activity. Therefore, in recent years, it is considered that body dissatisfaction is a variable

that should be taken into account in public health agendas, specifically in preventive actions aimed at overcoming eating disorders, overweight and obesity.

Mainly, actions focusing on preventing overweight and obesity have been prioritized. The Clinical Practice Guide on the prevention and treatment of childhood-juvenile obesity prioritizes preventive actions targeting the young population and recommends the development of key messages emphasizing the playful aspects of healthy habits:

*[...] messages aimed at children should emphasize the playful and rewarding aspects of a physical activity and a varied diet (fun, pleasure, new tastes, wellness, enjoyment...), paying particular attention to their preferences and pushing messages related to health and illness into the background (p. 17).*

The aforementioned Clinical Practice Guide highlights the importance of fostering a positive body image and the self-esteem of young people :

*[...] interventions to promote healthy eating and to encourage physical activity should also foster a positive awareness of one's body image and help build and strengthen children's self-esteem. A special care is therefore recommended to avoid stigmatizing and blaming overweight children or their families (p. 16).*

Moreover, despite the recommendations and the immense expenditures made for promotion campaigns, data indicate that

childhood and adult obesity and overweight rates are increasing. In this regard, the Spanish Agency for Consumer Affairs, Food Safety and Nutrition estimates that, according to WHO criteria, approximately 41% of boys and girls between 6-9 years of age are overweight.

Regarding the adult population, the ENRICA study (Epidemiology of Obesity in Spain, 2009-2011) found out that 39.4% of the adult Spanish population is overweight, and 22.9% is obese.

For all these reasons, the research group "Mirada Crítica" from Castilla La Mancha University, believe that the development of programs have to combining obesity prevention, healthy living interventions, targeting risk factors for poor body imagen. Broadly focused ecological programs are providing evidence appropriately planned and grounded with strong theoretical frameworks of social and emotional learning programs, positive psychology, and the Health Promoting Schools Pramework. Besides, future research should focus on comibining several different and complementary longitudianl preventive approaches among a broad age rango of students, different cultural backgrounds, families and teachers.

## References

Unión Europea. Reglamento Nº 282/2014 del Parlamento Europeo y del consejo de 11 de marzo de 2014 relativo a la creación de un tercer programa de acción de la Unión en el ámbito de la salud para el período 2014-2020. Diario Oficial de la Unión Europea 21 mar. 2014. [acceso em: 01 abr. 2017]. Disponible em: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32014R0282&from=ES>

Aguilar Ibáñez IA, López Aguilar X, Mancilla Díaz JM. Factores psicosociales de la obesidad infantil: una revisión teórica. Cuadernos de Medicina Psicosomática y Psiquiatría de Enlace 2014; 111:34-61.

Wilksch SM, Paxton SJ, Byrne SM, Austin SB, McLean SA, Thompson RM, et al. Prevention across the spectrum: a randomized controlled trial of three programs to reduce risk factors for both eating disorders and obesity. Psychol Med. 2015; 45(9):1811-1823.

Espana. Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación. Guía de práctica clínica sobre la prevención y el tratamiento de la obesidad infantojuvenil. Barcelona: Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación; 2009.

Espana. Ministerio de Sanidad y Consumo. La estrategia NAOS. Estrategia para la nutrición, actividad física y prevención de la obesidad. Madrid: Agencia Española de Seguridad Alimentaria; 2005.

Agencia Española de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutrición. Aladino. Estudio de vigilancia del crecimiento, alimentación, actividad física, desarrollo infantil y obesidad en España 2015. Madrid: Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad; 2016.