

Nutritional status, breakfast habits and fruit and vegetables consumption among children in a preschool at Fundão city

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Introduction

The prevalence of overweight in childhood has dramatically increased over the years. herefore, it is importante to set up healthy eating practices during this period. According to European Commission, Portugal presents one of the highest rates of child obesity. Between 2 and 5 years old, 29% of children are overweight and 12.5% are obese.

Objectives

This paper presents the nutritional status of 3-5 years old children in a public preschool from Fundão and describes the breakfast (BF), fruit and vegetables (F&V) habits consumption.

Methods

This cross-sectional study, conducted since May to August 2012, analyzed a group of 40 children (19 girls and 21 boys). Evaluation of nutritional status was based on anthropometric measures (height and weight) and classification was according CDC criteria (CDC 2002). Data on BF and F&V daily consumption were collected using a 24-hour recall during 3 days.

Results

It was found a prevalence of 35% with overweight, 20% with pre-obesity and 15% with obesity. We determined that 22.5% used to eat F&V frequently, 45% rarely and 32.5% sporadically. In what concerns to BF, all the children consumed dairy products; 52.5% of the children consume bread, cereals and toasts; 22.5% reported eating high caloric foods like sweets and bakery; just 2.5% choose to eat fruit.

Conclusions

This paper shows the studied sample has a prevalence of overweight greater than the portuguese average. About half of the children did not consume F&V properly. There is a need to implement intervention programs in schools to promote F&V intake and healthy habits to slow down obesity, the main risk factor associated to diabetes and cardiovascular diseases and some kinds of cancer.