

Project – “Colorful world of foods”

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According to WHO, overweight and obesity are one of the most serious public health problems of the 21st century in Europe. The obesity trend is especially alarming in children and adolescents. The prevalence of pediatric obesity is growing steadily in the United States and Europe as well as in developing and newly industrialised countries.

Recent studies have shown an increase in the prevalence of overweight and obesity in Portuguese children, showing that Portugal has the greatest prevalence of overweight and obese children (30,6 percent of boys and 21,6 percent of girls in both categories) among 11 years-old.

Childhood is a period of behaviours, attitudes and knowledge acquisition, being essential to influence will certainly last until adult life.

The main objectives of this project was to promote healthy food habits and to develop strategies to increase the consumption of fruit and vegetables among preschool children.

The project was developed on July 2009 preschool children from 5 to 6 years old at a kindergarten in a city on center of Portugal. The project started with an initial knowledge evaluation about healthy foods. It were developed different activities, such as anthropometric measurements, didactic games and cooking. It was made an evaluation of project results.

During four days of activities, all children participated actively and enthusiastically. At the end of the project all children experience vegetables, fruits and soup and the acceptability was considered good, even when a initial rejection of unknown foods was observed.

We may conclude that nutritional education strategies can be very effective in developing healthy eating habits, particularly in younger age groups, namely presenting new food products to children or at least new ways of cooking or serve them.