



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Food habits of the school population from La Mancha-Centro Health Area (Ciudad Real)[☆]



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KEYWORDS

Diet;
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Abstract

Objective: To assess the dietary pattern of the school population from La Mancha-Centro Health Area (Ciudad Real).

Methodology: A cross-sectional study conducted on a representative sample of schoolchildren aged 6–12 years, using a questionnaire to determine their general dietary habits and a record of their 24-h intake.

Results: A total of 1142 schoolchildren were included, with 612 boys (53.6%) and 530 girls (46.4%), and a mean age of 9.3 ± 1.7 years of age. The frequency of food intake was 4.62 ± 0.6 times a day, which decreased with the age of the schoolchildren ($P = .044$), and increased with the educational level of parents ($P = .004$). Food preference influenced the choice in the meals consumed. The level of appetite was related directly with weight and body mass index (BMI) ($P < .001$), age ($P = .02$), and number of daily food intakes by the children ($P = .038$). The food groups most frequently consumed were cereals and their derivatives (92.8%), milk and dairy products (90.45%), while vegetables were the least consumed (35.46%). Over 70% of the sample usually consumed olive oil.

Conclusion: The dietary pattern of the school population maintains some of the features of traditional Mediterranean dietary pattern, such as the habit of daily breakfast, the greater consumption of olive oil and cereals. On the other hand, other characteristics are remarkable, such as the low consumption of fruit and vegetables and the high consumption of meat.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Dieta;
 Hábitos dietéticos;
 Escolares;
 Infancia

Patrón dietético de la población escolar del Área La Mancha-Centro (Ciudad Real)**Resumen**

Objetivo: Valorar el patrón dietético de la población escolar del Área de Salud La Mancha Centro (Ciudad Real).

Metodología: Estudio transversal sobre una muestra representativa de los escolares de 6 a 12 años. Se utilizó un cuestionario para explorar los hábitos dietéticos generales y un recordatorio de ingesta de 24 h.

Resultados: Se evaluó a 1.142 escolares, 612 niños (53,6%) y 530 niñas (46,4%), con una edad de $9,3 \pm 1,7$ años. La frecuencia de la ingesta de alimentos, de $4,62 \pm 0,6$ veces al día, decrecía de forma estadísticamente significativa con la edad de los escolares ($p=0,044$) y aumentaba con el nivel educativo de los padres ($p=0,004$). La preferencia era un factor influyente en la elección de los alimentos consumidos. El grado de apetito se relacionó de forma directa con el peso y el índice de masa corporal ($p < 0,001$), la edad ($p = 0,02$) y el número de ingestas diarias ($p = 0,038$). Los grupos de alimentos más frecuentemente ingeridos fueron los cereales y derivados (92,8%), la leche y derivados (90,45%) y los menos, las verduras y hortalizas (35,46%). Más del 70% de la muestra consumía como aceite habitual el de oliva.

Conclusión: El patrón dietético de los escolares mantiene algunas de las características del patrón de dieta mediterránea tradicional, como el hábito de desayuno, el elevado consumo de aceite de oliva o de cereales, pero no otras, destacando el escaso consumo de verduras y frutas, y el elevado de carnes.

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Introduction

An adequate nutrient intake adapted to each age ensures the correct physical and cognitive development of the child, prevents acute nutrition problems, such as iron deficiency or tooth decay, and reduces the risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer or osteoporosis.^{1,2}

Different healthy dietary patterns have been proposed both for the general population and for specific population subsets: children, the elderly, pregnant women, etc. Those addressing the healthy paediatric population are usually endorsed by various scientific associations or public health agencies, and tend to concur on important aspects, such as the daily distribution of food intake into several meals, the weekly frequency of consumption of various food groups, or the determination of specific foods or amounts of food that are recommended or recommended against.³⁻⁶

The dietary habits of children in developed countries have been changing in recent years. These changes in dietary patterns have contributed to increases in the prevalence of obesity and associated diseases, such as disorders of carbohydrate metabolism and dyslipidaemia.⁷ This increase in the prevalence of obesity has been associated with an increase in the energy density of the foods consumed, but also with daily eating frequency, a reduced dietary diversity, or the more or less frequent consumption of certain food groups.⁸⁻¹⁰

The aim of this study was to analyse the dietary patterns of a representative sample of the population of schoolchildren in the Health Area of La Mancha Centro (Ciudad Real) in order to determine their dietary profile and compare it

to the most common dietary patterns that are considered healthy.

Materials and methods**Study design, scope, and population**

We conducted a cross-sectional study on a representative sample of schoolchildren aged 6–12 years that resided in the Health Area of La Mancha Centro, which includes several towns in Ciudad Real, Cuenca and Toledo.

We performed two-stage sampling in a population of 13,896 children enrolled in 73 schools, with probabilities proportional to the size of the primary units. In the first stage, 20 clusters (schools) were chosen, and in the second stage, 60 children were selected at random from each of these schools.

We designed an ad hoc data collection model to gather information on aspects related to dietary patterns, which was recorded in two data collection notebooks (DCNs). The DCN1, filled out by the researchers, was used to evaluate the presence of iodine deficiency disorders, and the DCN2, completed by the parents and/or legal guardians of the children, were used to specifically analyse the diet.

The study was approved by the clinical research ethics committee of the Hospital General La Mancha Centro. All participants were given an informed consent form that was signed by the parents or legal guardians.

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