



REVIEW ARTICLE

The pediatrician's role in the first thousand days of the child: the pursuit of healthy nutrition and development[☆]



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KEYWORDS

Child nutrition;
Child development;
Child health;
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Abstract

Objectives: To describe the concept of the first 1000 days, its importance for health, and actions to be implemented, particularly by pediatricians, in order to attain healthy nutrition and development.

Sources: A nonsystematic review was carried out in the SciELO, LILACS, MEDLINE, Scopus, and Web of Science databases, encompassing the last decade, using the terms 1000 days, child nutrition, child development, childhood, and child. A non-systematic search was performed online for organizations that use the 1000-day concept and give recommendations on children's health.

Summary of the findings: The first 1000 days range from conception to the end of the second year of life. It represents an important period to implement interventions to ensure healthy nutrition and development, which will bring benefits throughout life. Children should receive adequate nutrition, through proper prenatal diet, exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months, addition of adequate complementary foods, and continued breastfeeding up to 2 years of life. Given the condition of absolute dependence on an adult's care, it is crucial to establish an enabling and friendly environment, necessary for the development of strong bonds with caregivers, laying the groundwork for a full and healthy development.

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE

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Saúde materno-infantil

Conclusions: The pediatrician, together with other professionals, can act by promoting actions emphasizing the concept of the first 1000 days to ensure healthy nutrition and development. Focusing on actions in this period may increase the child's chance of having a healthy and productive life in the future, strengthening family and community ties, helping to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

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Atuação do pediatra nos primeiros mil dias da criança: a busca pela nutrição e desenvolvimento saudáveis

Resumo

Objetivos: descrever o conceito dos primeiros mil dias, sua importância para a saúde, e ações a serem implementadas, em especial pelos pediatras, para que a criança alcance nutrição e desenvolvimento saudáveis.

Fonte dos dados: Revisão não sistemática nas bases SciELO, LILACS, MEDLINE, Scopus e Web of Science nos últimos dez anos utilizando os termos 1000 dias, nutrição infantil, desenvolvimento infantil, infância, criança. Busca não sistemática na Internet de organizações que adotam o conceito dos 1000 Dias e emitem recomendações sobre a saúde da criança.

Síntese dos dados: Os primeiros mil dias vão da concepção até o final do segundo ano de vida. É um importante período para intervenções que garantam nutrição e desenvolvimento saudáveis, que trarão benefícios em todo o ciclo de vida. As crianças devem receber alimentação adequada, por meio de nutrição pré-natal adequada, aleitamento materno exclusivo nos primeiros 6 meses, adição de alimentos complementares adequados e continuação da amamentação até os 2 anos. Face à condição de dependência absoluta de cuidados de um adulto, é fundamental que tenham um ambiente propício e acolhedor necessário para desenvolver laços fortes com seus cuidadores, lançando as bases para um desenvolvimento pleno e saudável.

Conclusões: O pediatra, junto com outros profissionais, pode atuar promovendo ações com ênfase no conceito dos primeiros mil dias que garantam a nutrição e o desenvolvimento saudáveis da criança. Focalizar ações neste período poderá aumentar as chances da criança ter uma vida saudável e produtiva no futuro, fortalecendo famílias e comunidades, contribuindo para quebrar ciclo intergeracional da pobreza.

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Introduction

In 2008, *The Lancet*¹ published a series on maternal and child malnutrition, which identified the need to focus on the period from conception to the end of the child's second year – the first thousand days, in which good nutrition and healthy growth would have benefits that would last for a lifetime. This series also drew attention to the need to prioritize national nutrition programs to encourage and strengthen the integration between health programs, among other recommendations. Since the publication of this series, the concept of the first thousand days has been adopted by agencies and international non-governmental organizations,^{2,3} used as reference by researchers in the field of health,⁴ and mentioned in scientific articles.⁵

In this sense, this article aims to describe and discuss the concept of the first thousand days and its importance for the health of children and adults, and to identify the actions to be implemented during this period, particularly by pediatricians, in order to attain healthy nutrition and development.

Data source

A non-systematic review was carried out in the MEDLINE, SciELO, LILACS, EMBASE, Scopus, and Web of Science databases, encompassing a minimum period of 10 years, using the terms "1000 days," "child nutrition," "child development," "childhood," and "child." A search was also conducted in Google Scholar publications, as well as in the website of organizations that adopt the concept of 1000 days and give recommendations on child's health. The term "1000 days" is not included in any of the searched databases as a descriptor and, thus, the search is rather limited when this term is used alone. However, when descriptors such as "child nutrition" are combined with "1000 days," it is possible to identify articles related to this subject. Using this strategy, it was feasible to increase the number of articles to be assessed. For instance, the search in the MEDLINE database using the terms "child nutrition" and "1000 days" resulted in 122 articles. For "child development" and "1000 days," 108 articles were identified. The articles found in the surveyed databases were evaluated regarding their association with the topic

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