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Original research article

Eating habits of adolescents and education by nurses on primary prevention



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ABSTRACT

The goal of the article is to present the results of the research which is focused on the eating habits of adolescents. These habits are the basis for education in the field of nursing and healthy lifestyle. The data collection was carried out using a non-standardized questionnaire. The sample group of respondents consisted of 1130 people living in South Bohemia, who were 15–18-years-old (the average age was 16.8 years), of which 732 (64.8%) were girls and 398 (35.2%) were boys. The research was carried out among pupils of four-year high schools, middle schools of health (MSH), middle vocational schools and vocational school institutions in the study field cook/waiter (VSI). The dependence of the monitored variables on the type of the monitored school was assessed using the chi-squared test (possibly Fisher's exact test). The results showed that high school pupils ate regularly 5 or 6 times a day, in contrast to other types of schools. High school pupils had a higher frequency of consuming daily meals during the week. Pupils from middle vocational schools had the worst results (their daily consumption of sweetened beverages was more than pupils from other schools). Pupils from middle vocational schools were more influenced by TV commercials in the selection of food. The results of our research point out various flaws in the daily and weekly frequency of food consumption in pupils from selected types of schools, while pupils from vocational schools were disadvantaged. For this reason, education in nutrition and lifestyle should be focused on the prevention of becoming overweight and obese and should be included in the routine care of children and adolescents.

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Introduction

The period of adolescence is often considered the most difficult and the most important period of human life, which includes the modulation of basic human values. From the biopsychosocial view, a number of quantitative and qualitative changes occur, which include sexual maturity, ability to reproduce, mastering new life roles and changes in thinking and intellectual abilities [1]. In the period of adolescence, primary prevention plays an important role because this is the time when life and eating habits form [2]. An important part of primary prevention is a targeted education, which has become a worldwide important aspect in the last few years regarding modern nursing as well. Emphasis is mainly put on the education in healthy dieting and the support of healthy lifestyles [3]. The educational skills of medical personnel are applied here because only professionally supervised education can create conditions for the active participation of individuals, which is very important in the educational process [4]. The basic and necessary skills of nurses also include a perfect orientation in educational methods aimed at individuals and groups as well [5]. The importance of the educational activities of nurses responds to the European strategy of the WHO, which is Health for everyone to the year 2000 and the following strategy Health 21. Based on these strategies, a nurse should focus on the activities connected to health support and the prevention of illnesses, and providing information on health not only to adolescents but also to all population groups [5,6]. The orientation in the issue of nutrition is very important because bad eating habits, a high intake of delis and substantial foods, and a low intake of vegetables and fruits are the common features of the eating habits of adolescents [7,8].

The goal of the article is to present the results of the research which is focused on the eating habits of adolescents, and specifically, to map the frequencies of daily meals, preferences in selected beverages and the influence of commercials on the selection of groceries.

Type of school	Absolute number	%
High school	540	47.8
Middle school of health	232	20.5
MSH a VSI – cook-waiter	358	31.7
Total	1130	100.0

School	Less than 3× a day	3× a day	4× a day	5× a day	6× a day	More than 6× a day	Total
High school	12 (2.2%)	54 (10.1%)	140 (26.1%)	209 (39.1%)	79 (14.7%)	42 (7.8%)	536 (100.0%)
MSH	15 (6.7%)	51 (22.8%)	53 (23.7%)	69 (30.8%)	20 (8.9%)	16 (7.1%)	224 (100.0%)
VSI	32 (9.0%)	92 (25.8%)	96 (26.8%)	82 (23.0%)	35 (9.8%)	20 (5.6%)	357 (100.0%)

Key: MSH – middle school of health; VSI – vocational school institution.
Statistically significant differences are in bold.

Materials and methods

The research was carried out using a non-standardized questionnaire, which contained 52 questions. The questions were divided into topic sections. The first series of questions focused on the characteristics of the respondents. Secondly, the respondents were questioned about the level of influence of commercials on their selection of groceries. The following questions mapped the intake of non-alcoholic and alcoholic beverages. The respondents were also questioned on how many times a week they consumed basic daily meals and how many times they consumed the selected foods. The article presents only partial results gained from the questionnaire. The research group of respondents consisted of 1130 people living in South Bohemia, who were 15–18-years-old (the average age was 16.8 years), of which 732 (64.8%) were girls and 398 (35.2%) were boys. The research was carried out in pupils of four-year high schools, middle schools of health, middle vocational schools and vocational school institutions in the study field cook/waiter – their representation is shown in Table 1. The age from 15 to 18 years, the studies at one of the mentioned schools and the will to co-operate were the basic criteria for including a respondent into the research group. The data was collected between March and June of 2015. The questionnaires were personally delivered to the relevant school and classroom, where the respondents were instructed on how to fill them. 100% of the questionnaires were returned. The statistical data analysis was carried out using the programmes SASD and SPSS. The dependence of the monitored variables on the type of the monitored school was assessed using the chi-squared test (possibly Fisher's exact test) in a contingency table and completed with a mark scheme. The selected level of significance α was 0.05 (5%).

Results

The article presents the results of the research which is focused on the frequency of the daily and weekly consumption of meals, selected beverages and the influence of commercials on the selection of groceries.

Table 2 presents the results regarding the frequency of the daily consumption of individual meals in adolescents. Based on the chi-squared test, adolescents showed a statistically significant relationship between the type of school they attended and the daily consumption of meals ($p < 0.001$). High school pupils ate 5× ($p < 0.001$) and 6× ($p < 0.01$) more frequently compared to the pupils of other types of school. VSI pupils mostly ate 3× a day ($p < 0.001$), even fewer than 3× a day ($p < 0.001$).

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