

6.E. Health risks and response in school settings

Children learn, children do! Results of “Planning Health in School”, a behavioural-change programme

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Background

“Planning Health in School” programme (PHS-pro) is an educational health promotion model developed for school grade-6 children. The PHS-pro was designed based on the

Transtheoretical Model (TTM) and integrated eight learning modules to improve eating behaviours, in particular the intake of fruit and vegetables, and to guide children for healthy choices. This study evaluates the impact of one-school year behavioural-change programme on nine eating behaviours. Overweight and obesity continue to rise worldwide, and inadequate consumption of fruit and vegetables is one of the key contributors for unhealthy diets among children. Consequently, the PHS-pro was developed aiming to fill the lack of preventive programmes in Portugal and find effective strategies to reduce obesity rates in Portuguese children.

Methods

All grade-6 children of the largest school of a suburban city included in the second largest metropolitan area of Portugal (Porto) participated in the PHS-pro. Children were evaluated throughout the programme implementation in a repeated time-series design. Children's outcome evaluation was conducted through seven 3-day food records for eating behaviours recorded after each learning module, and participatory activities analysed their attitudes, preferences and expectations.

Results

Substantial changes were found in several eating behaviours over the programme, supported by children's motivation for change observed in their attitudes and expectations. Significant changes were observed on vegetable soup ($p=0.003$), milk products ($p=0.024$), and fruit to higher consumption ($p=0.008$), while high-energy dense food ($p=0.048$), and soft drink consumption ($p=0.042$), significantly decreased. No positive effects on fried food, water, vegetables and bread were found.

Conclusions

The PHS-pro intervention planned according to the TTM and participation techniques can be effective in developing healthy eating behaviours for guiding young people to a healthy growth.

Key messages:

- PHS-pro improved effectively children's eating behaviours, in particular the intake of fruit and vegetables.
- The behavioural-change model of PHS-pro revealed to be an appropriate methodology to guide children for healthy choices.