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EATING HABITS IN SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

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Adopting a healthy lifestyle at childhood would reduce a number of conditions with a great influence on the quality of life, as we can recall obesity and malnutrition. Diet can be both a primary cause of a disease and a protective factor against it. The school-age child can be very easily influenced in one direction by class, teacher, family or media. That is why the education and advice received at this age are very important, as they can „cut off the roots” the possible health problems that could change the whole life course. In view of these considerations, we have focused on the analysis of the nutrition of the school-age children in order to identify non-healthy eating habits and their influence on the nutritional status.

Methods: We evaluated the eating habits on a cohort of 270 children aged 7 to 15 from an urban school in Romania. We applied KIDMED questionnaire, by Serra-Majem et al. (2004), comprised of 16 questions with dichotomous response possibilities (YES / NO).

Results: Of the study group, 91.48% responded that they consume fresh fruit or fresh fruit juice daily, while 8.51% responded negatively. At second item of the questionnaire, „if they eat more than a fruit by day”, only 68.51% of the children gave a positive answer. Answer to the question „if they eat once a day a vegetable was positive in 82.59% of cases and negative in 17.40%, but only 57.50 % of the study group eats more than one vegetable by day. From the study group 42.22% of children are not eating breakfast. 66.29% of children eat cereals/cereals products at breakfast, 61.11% of them are eating milk/milk based products at breakfast and 23.70% are eating pastry at breakfast. 36.66% of the study group eats more than once a week fast-food and 52.96% of them eat more than once a day sugar and sweets. 52.59 % of children declared that they eat olive oil at home.

Conclusions: A high number of children have unhealthy habits in schools. School-based programs can play an important role in promoting lifelong healthy eating.