

HEALTHY FOOD PRACTICAL IN CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

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Introduction: Obesity is considered by the World Health Organization an epidemic of the XXI century, associated to feeding practices with scientific evidence. In Portugal, scarce studies about dietary habits among the population with special needs.

Objectives: This work aims to develop children with intellectual disabilities positive attitudes towards healthy food and encourage acceptance of a healthy and varied diet as a way to promote health.

Methods: The study was developed with six institutionalized students, in the 3rd cycle of basic education, with intellectual disabilities and took place in daily school life of a school district of Portalegre (Portugal). We adopted the methodology of action research. It was featured the eating habits of the students and evaluated anthropometric measurements. The analysis of information allowed us to elaborate and implement an empowerment program, depending on the specificity of each subject. It was developed a new cycle of observation that allowed us to assess the immediate impact of didactic empowerment sequence.

Results: The results point to a favorable change in feeding behavior in the period immediately due to the implementation of the empowerment program.

Conclusions: Environmental factors, in middle school, seem to constitute as high facilitators of change of eating habits. We consider appropriate to implement continuous didactic sequences aimed at empowerment of children with intellectual disabilities to healthy eating practices.

Keywords: Empowerment. Health. Special needs. Alimentation.