

## NUTRITIONAL BEHAVIOR AND THE RISK FOR OBESITY AMONG CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

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The increasing prevalence of obesity makes its prevention a crucial objective, children and teenagers becoming the prior target group for action.

Since obese adolescents tend to remain obese in adulthood, and because obesity during adolescence is always related with the increased risk for cardiovascular and metabolic diseases, the early intervention orientated toward weight loss is a relevant approach, even if its efficiency and long-term extension are not fully demonstrated.

The efficient management of weight during childhood and adolescence is the key element of a durable prevention of obesity.

Our work is focused on the analysis of some aspects of nutritional behavior, food practices and nutrition knowledge among children and teens aged 11–18 years, with risk for obesity.

A relation between some unhealthy food practices and the anthropological diagnosis of risk for obesity was found. We consider necessary to widen the investigation area to a more numerous population of children, because these correlations could be verified only on large series of subjects, which assure the national representativeness.

### MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study sample is composed of 3238 children and teenagers from different Bucharest school units, 1378 boys and 1860 girls, aged 11-18 years.

Their body mass was evaluated using body mass index (Quetelet index) and the following scale of BMI percentiles: Underweight under the 5<sup>th</sup> percentile; Normal weight between 15<sup>th</sup> & 85<sup>th</sup> percentile; Risk for overweight between the 85<sup>th</sup> & 95<sup>th</sup> percentiles; Overweight at or over the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile.

A questionnaire regarding the nutritional behavior and life style was further applied, in order to catch the unhealthy behaviors of children and teens and their correlation with the prevalence of malnutrition and obesity.