

Solutions to Child Obesity in the Caribbean

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Index

- Introduction
- Development
- Bibliography

Summary

The increase of child obesity in the Caribbean is a health problem due to the complications among children and the consequences that it can produce in adult life such as non-transmittable chronic disease; therefore it is necessary to face this problem in an effective way in order to achieve the best results in a short period of time. In this research we present actions that a preventative health plan should include for the Caribbean community. Among these actions are the active participation of the individual gradually increasing moderate to intense physical activity in order to achieve at the same time develop an awareness of healthy eating habits.

Key Words: Child Obesity, interventions

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Introduction

Obesity is the result of the existence of a positive energetic balance that is prolonged over an extended period of time, and recently constitutes a pandemic disease that affects individuals of all races, latitudes, genders and ages, without taking into consideration their socio-economic level.

Each year this problem affects more and more young people in the Caribbean region.

The only effective treatment against obesity is getting a negative energetic balance by increasing the physical activity and reducing the ingestion calories from food; therefore its necessary to take actions focused in developing healthy lifestyles by doing moderate to intense physical activities accompanied by eating a balanced diet.

In order to develop a community that practices a healthy lifestyle it's necessary that they are actively looking for ways to maintain this new lifestyle.

In this study we give an outline of a program with activities to prevent and reduce

excessively bad nutrition among boys and girls, integrating actions that include creating an organization against obesity, to train community leaders in subjects such as physical fitness, healthy diets, increasing social interaction through healthy lifestyles.

This intervention program can be applied with a good chance of success among the Caribbean and Latin American countries, which should have as a main priority the rapid and direct confrontation of this epidemic that is affecting us.

Development

This program of activities includes ways to promote, prevent, curate and rehabilitation. This program is integrated for: Organizations against obesity, social integrations of physical activity and healthy diets, training teachers, parents, children and food venders.

ORGANIZATION AGAINST CHILD OBESITY

The creation of the Organization Against Child Obesity is one of the more efficient and effective ways that a community can develop a successful application of measures to fight this disease.

The creation of such an organization facilitates the formation and function of an organization that contributes to avoid and reduce overweight and obesity. This organization must implement physical activities in order to make people more aware of a healthy diet and lifestyle.

In the creation and function of this organization the people who participate must be somehow related in this noble cause, such as government officials, educators, doctors, venders and any kind of community leaders.

Based on democratic principles, the development of educational procedures and the updating of scientific information, the organization must work to inform all people about prevention and the reduction of a sedentary life, bad health habits, and obesity.

OUTLINE FOR TRAINING

It is not possible defeat child obesity without knowledge among teachers, parents and children on nutrition and physical activity.

Informing teachers about healthy lifestyles and training them to teach parents and children is a good strategy to bring this knowledge to the public.

The courses to train teachers must include the following subjects:

-Physical activity; Physical education classes; Extracurricular physical activities: such as sports, dances, games and individual exercise.

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- The state of nutrition among children ages 6 to 11 in Aruba: To understand the bad nutritional habits in a school and the possible effects on health. Procedures to avoid and eliminate unhealthy behaviors.

-The relation that exists between a sedentary lifestyle, bad food habits and obesity, and other consequences to the health of children.

-Good hygiene in the preparation of foods.

-Procedures to train parents on subjects such as physical activity, nutrition, hygiene in order to make the children healthier.

In courses for the parents the following topics must be taught:

-Introduction of physical activity. For example, Physical Education classes, sports, dances, and extracurricular activities among other things.

- Basic principles of nutrition. Measures to preserve nutritional quality and maintain a sufficient level of anti-oxidants in foods.

- Healthy nutrition

- Healthy preservation of food.

- Procedures to elevate the level of physical activity and healthy lifestyles among children.

- A plan to educate children in physical activities, nutrition and hygiene.

The prevention and reduction of obesity is only possible with the awareness of those who suffer from this disease. In the case of children, besides the possibility that their age allows them to remain naive, they should have the knowledge to use opportunities in order to create more active and healthy people. The children will receive a book called "How to be Successful!" (¡Cómo ser vencedores!). It includes the following topics:

-The benefits of regularly practicing sports.

-Foods: The characteristics of different food groups.

-Good nutritional habits: Food that should be eaten more often and food that should be avoided.

-Healthy preservation of food.

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- Healthy active children.
- Training of food handlers.



SOCIAL COMMUNICATION ABOUT HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Educational messages should be given to the community about the doing moderate to intense physical activities, good food habits and healthy preservation of food.

These messages should include the following:

- Moderate to intense physical activities in order to improve health and physical appearance.
- Do at least 90 minutes of physical activity every day.
- If you desire to be healthy, you can do it.
- Make a conscious decision to be active and improve your lifestyle.
- Participate in "Physical Activity Day".
- Walk to and from school.
- Relax after working out.
- Take appropriate measures to avoid injury when doing physical activity.
- Breakfast is the most important meal of the day.
- It is better to eat smaller portions, and more frequently during the day.
- Eat portions of fruits and vegetables and least 9 times each day.
- Avoid fried foods.
- Eating foods high in fat is bad for your health.
- Eat fish and chicken instead of pork and meat.
- Consume dairy products that are low in fat.
- Reduce the consumption of salts of all kinds, but if you do eat it, Iodized salt is the healthiest.

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- Reduce the consumption of simple sugars.
- Eat natural juices of fruits and vegetable that do not contain sugars and additives.
- Eat complete, balanced meals.
- Reduce eating stuffing, smoked and salty foods.
- Guarantee the preservation of the food.

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ACTIONS TO INCREASE THE LEVEL OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

A plan must be developed that allows the accommodation of physical activity for at least 90 minutes each day. Ideally, thirty of those minutes should be at a high level of physical activity.

The 90 minutes can be split up throughout the day into smaller workouts: 10 minutes for moderate activity, and 5 minutes for intense activities.

These actions should be a part of the physical education at school, combined with extra curricular activities, with active guidance of teachers, parents and children.

ACTIONS THAT PROMOTE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

1. A movement to promote eating a balanced breakfast.
2. A movement to promote healthy nutrition.
3. To build a healthy life through nutrition.

PROCEDURE

Based on the results of surveys given to parents and teachers it was possible to identify that children do not eat breakfast, and how parents and teachers perceive this habit.

As part of the training given to teachers, parents and children, they must be reminded of the importance of eating breakfast each morning.

With the participation of teachers, administrators, and promoters meetings must be held with parents according to the grade level of their children in order to:

- Identify the problem of the children missing breakfast,
- Analyze the cause of this problem and,
- Find possible solutions so that children can eat a healthy breakfast every day.

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The teachers, with the authorization of parents will make sure that children eat breakfast every day.

Teachers, parents and children will implement actions that should always be followed in order to facilitate, strengthen, in order to make sure that children are eating breakfast every day.

Based on the results of surveys given to parents and teachers, it is possible to identify the children that consume excessive fried foods and refined sugars, and also children that don't eat enough fruits and vegetables, and the teachers and parents perception about this problem.

As part of the training of parents, teachers and children they must be informed about the benefits of limiting or reducing fried foods and refined sugars, also increasing the consumption of fruits and vegetables to at least five times per day.

With the participation of teachers, facilitators and promoters, meetings must be held with parents according to their children's grade level in order to:

- Identify excessive consumption of fried foods and refined sugar by children,
- Determine the average level of consumption of fruits and vegetables,
- Analyze the caused of these habits and find possible solutions in order to help children develop their own healthy lifestyle.

With the permission of parents, teachers must monitor the nutritional behavior of children in order to identify the best solutions to the problem.

The following messages will help preserve health:

- Chew and eat food slowly!
- Be aware of your appropriate body weight in relation height!
- Always eat a variety of foods. That way it will be more enjoyable.
- It is healthier to eat many times each day, while reducing portion size.
- Start each day with a balanced breakfast.
- The presence of a variety of vegetables and fruits in ones diet helps ensure good health.
- Food is more enjoyable if you include a large variety of grains.

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-Eating lean meats, fish and chicken without the skin are important elements of a healthy diet.

-Choose vegetable oils, they are good for health. Choose these over animal fats and oils!

-Dairy products must be low in fat.

-Drinks and foods that are rich in refined sugar should be consumed in moderation.

-Reduce the consumption of salty foods.

-Drink lots of fresh water every day.

-In order to preserve foods from dangerous germs, hygienic and sanitary procedures should be – followed during the preparation of food.

-Always eat with the entire family.

REMEMBER THAT A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE EXTENDS YOUR LIFE EVERY YEAR.

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