

# ASSESSING THE PROGRAMME OF PROMOTING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE IN ADULTS PART II

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**Keywords:** nutrition, physical activity, health status, assessment

**Abstract:** Nutrition and physical activity play an increasingly important role in influencing health in the European Union. EU Member States are facing the problem of overweight and obesity. After public consultation on the Green Paper „Promoting healthy eating and physical activity: Towards a European strategy for the prevention of obesity and chronic diseases”, the European Commission adopted the Europe 2007 strategy on health issues related to nutrition, overweight and obesity. Community Strategy identifies policies that play a role on nutrition and physical activity and are designed to support the efforts of Member States to prevent overweight and obesity. These include actions in the field of public health, food, agriculture, transport, regional politics, sports, education and statistics.

**Cuvinte cheie:** alimentație, activitate fizică, stare de sănătate, evaluare

**Rezumat:** Alimentația și activitatea fizică joacă un rol tot mai important în influențarea stării de sănătate în Uniunea Europeană. Statele membre ale Uniunii Europene se confruntă cu problema supragreutății și obezității. După o consultare publică privind Cartea Verde “Promovarea alimentației sănătoase și activității fizice: Spre o strategie europeană pentru prevenirea obezității și a bolilor cronice”, Comisia Europeană a adoptat în anul 2007 Strategia pentru Europa, privind problemele de sănătate legate de nutriție, supragreutate și obezitate. Strategia identifică politicile comunitare, care joacă un rol referitor la nutriție și activitate fizică și care sunt menite să sprijine eforturile statelor membre de prevenire a supragreutății și obezității. Acestea includ acțiuni în domeniul sănătății publice, alimente, agricultură, transport, politică regională, sport, educație și statistică.

## INTRODUCTION

At the level of the Regional Public Health Centre of, Sibiu, there has been developing place since 1995 a programme to promote a healthy lifestyle in adults. Currently, this activity is conducted within the National Programme of Assessing and Promoting Health and Health Education (PN V) Subprogramme 1 - Promoting a healthy lifestyle. This programme focuses primarily on promoting healthy eating and fighting sedentary.

## PURPOSE

This study aims at assessing the intervention on two components of a healthy lifestyle, such as diet and physical activity in the people participating in the programme of promoting a healthy lifestyle within the Regional Centre for Public Health of Sibiu.

## METHODS

The total number of people participating in the programme in 2012 was 138. The people who have attended the previous courses regarding the healthy lifestyle (advanced) were 117, and 21 people entered the program in 2012 (beginners).

The patients in the study group are attending health education courses regarding the healthy eating. The courses are open, interactive with a duration of two months, one hour per week. The subjects are also participating in kinetoprophyllaxy sessions weekly, under the guidance and supervision of a medical physical culture teacher. Within this programme, each patient receives informative brochures and leaflets on various topics related to healthy lifestyles developed by the Regional Centre of Public Health of Sibiu

## Study batch characteristics

The total number of persons participating in the programme in the year 2012 was 138. The subjects in the study group belong mostly to the age group of 60-69 years old and 50-59 years old. There are 15 people aged 70 years old and over, and very few young subjects are under the age of 40 years old. Most of the studied people have higher and secondary education, only 6 people were graduating secondary school. Regarding the medical history, 96% of the people surveyed are considered at risk, with at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease (e.g. hypertension, obesity). The calculation of the body mass index (BMI) indicates that most people are overweight and obese and only 41 people (out of 138) have a normal weight. The nutrition courses were conducted in May and October of 2012, applying each time one questionnaire, before and after the course.

The results of the questionnaires were processed and analyzed statistically, drawing afterwards the appropriate conclusions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The evaluation of the programme of promoting a healthy lifestyle in adults was achieved by applying the questionnaires to the study participants, before and after the course.

Most subjects were in the age group of 0-69 years old (11), females (85%), with higher and post-secondary education (14), retired and married in most of them.

When asked about how they appreciate their weight, more than half believe that is too high (11), 6 agree they have a

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normal weight. From the group of 17 people surveyed neither is underweight.

Regarding the frequency they inform themselves about healthy lifestyles, it is shown that almost all people included in the programme are being regularly informed (15), only two patients do this occasionally.

The sources of information are especially the television and the specialists in the field (family physicians, physicians from other specialties), women's magazines and less the Internet.

From the subjects' responses on the frequency with which certain foods should be consumed within a week, we found that fruits and vegetables play a leading role in their diet being consumed daily, and white meat up to five times a week. Red meat is consumed 2-3 times per week by the advanced subjects and more frequently, 5-6 times per week, by the newly enrolled in the programme. Sweets are eaten more frequently by the subjects recently initiated in the programme, unlike those advanced who have reduced the consumption of sweets after attending the nutrition classes (figure no. 1A, 1B).

Figure no. 1A. Beginners' opinion regarding the frequency to consume certain foods/week

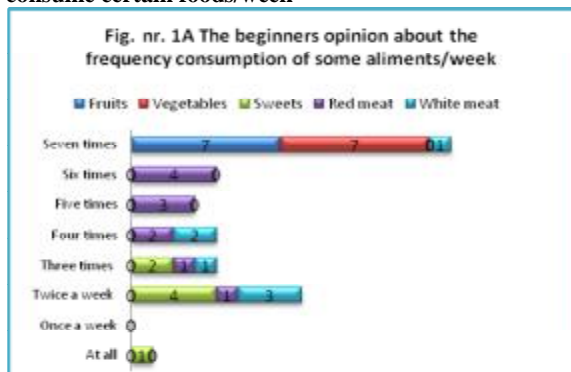
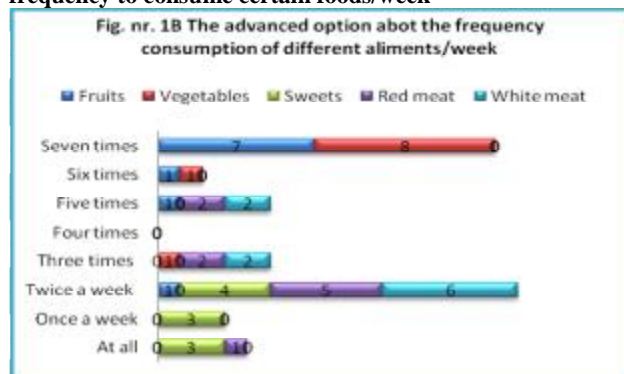


Figure no. 1B. Advanced subjects' opinion regarding the frequency to consume certain foods/week



Most subjects (15) consume breakfast daily, except for two people who never eat breakfast. Regarding the main meals, 14 of the 17 respondents regularly serve meals, only 2 of them do not do this regularly, and a person eat all three meals daily. When asked about eating fruits as snacks between meals, 8 subjects answered that they do not prefer fruits, but other types of snacks, and the remaining subjects are eating variably fruits, sweets or other snacks between meals.

Regarding the frequency with which subjects consumed certain foods weekly, the newest in the programme consume chicken, pork and fish, sweets and fried food, 1-3 times per week and 4-6 times per week, they eat milk, dairy products and bread (predominantly black bread). They also eat

very frequently (several times daily) fruits and vegetables, cereals (flakes, muesli) and never fast food products, chips and snacks (figures no. 2A, 2B).

Figure no. 2A. Frequency with which the beginners eat certain foods per week

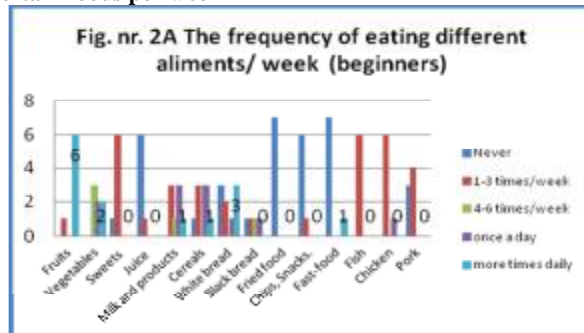
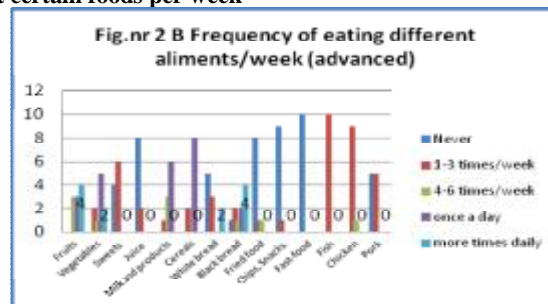
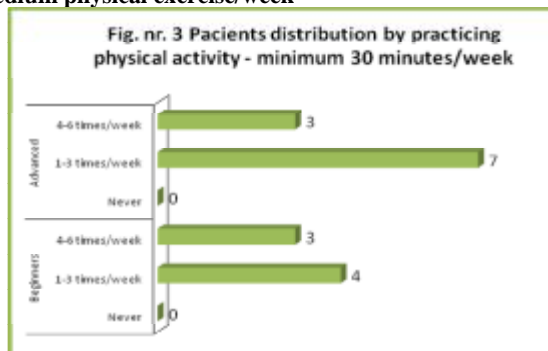


Figure no. 2B. Frequency with which the advanced subjects eat certain foods per week



Ask if they eat for hunger, appetite or lack of occupation or boredom, all subjects said they only eat when they feel hungry or when they are craving a certain food and never because they are bored. Regarding the effects of a balanced diet on the physical and mental wellbeing, most patients recognize that they feel healthier, have more energy and are more satisfied with themselves, but some of them doubt that food, even the healthy one, will remove all their problems related to weight. All patients enrolled in the programme, whether they are beginners or advanced practice medium physical exercise weekly within the kinetoprophylaxy programme conducted at the level of the Regional Public Health Centre of Sibiu (figure no. 3).

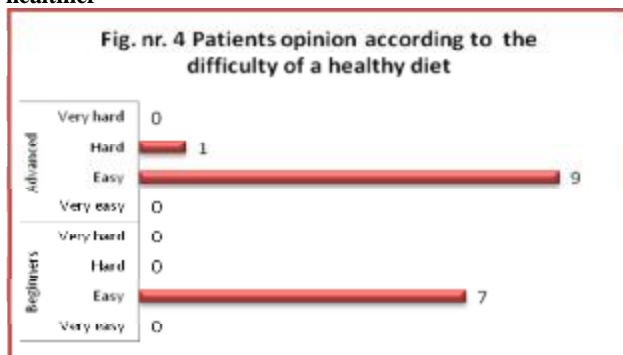
Figure no. 3. Patients' distribution according to practicing medium physical exercise/week



The majority of people surveyed also believe that regular physical activity creates a good feeling of complacency and gives them more energy and that are healthier. Only one respondent disagrees with these statements.

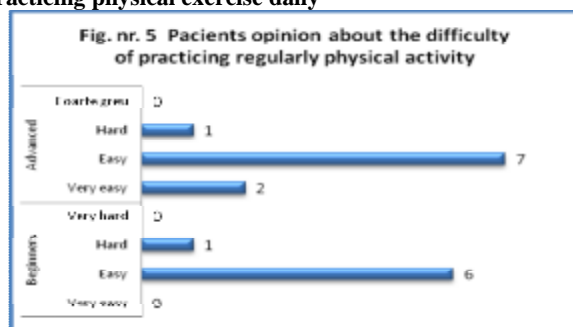
Asked how difficult it is to eat healthy, both beginners and the advanced patients said they face difficulties in this respect. One person out of 17 respondents said that it is hard to eat healthy due to the former eating habits which he is hardly giving up to (figure no. 4).

**Figure no. 4. Patients' opinion on the difficulty of eating healthier**



For most patients, it is easy to practice physical activity daily (13), very easy for 2 people, and for the remaining 2 people this is more difficult (figure no. 5).

**Figure no. 5. Patients' opinion regarding the difficulty of practicing physical exercise daily**



Regarding the intention to change their behaviour related to food and physical activity daily practice, 15 and 17 of the patients wish to continue the healthy lifestyle they have adopted. The other wished to resume the programme after having interrupted it. There are two people in the group that failed to adopt a healthy diet, but all patients succeeded in practicing regular physical activity.

### CONCLUSIONS

- Ø The number of participants in the programme is variable, as a result of a final output of the programme of certain people, of coming into the programme of the new ones and due to returning of some patients after a certain period of time.
- Ø The addressability to the programme for children and young people with weight problems is very low. The main reason is the busy schedule that does not give children too much time, plus their tendency towards inactivity and choosing to spend the time on the computer at the expense of practicing various physical activities, especially those outdoors.
- Ø The people with greater seniority in the programme inform themselves more on healthy lifestyle and intend to continue this lifestyle on long term.
- Ø For most participants, fruits, vegetables and white meat play a leading role in their diet. Red meat is rarely consumed by the subjects enrolled in the healthy lifestyle

programme in previous years and more frequently by the new participants. Sweets are preferred by the subjects recently initiating the programme, unlike those advanced who have gradually reduced the consumption of sweets, as a result of the knowledge gained in the nutrition courses.

- Ø After attending the nutrition course, the percentage of those eating healthier has increased.
- Ø Most patients agree that regular physical activity gives them a good feeling of complacency, they have more energy and feel better.
- Ø Regarding the intention to change their eating habits and practice regular physical activity, most patients wish to continue the healthy lifestyle adopted and part of them plan to resume it after a temporary interruption.

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