Spanish strategy for nutrition, physical activity and prevention of obesity (NAOS)

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Type of policy: Comprehensive national nutrition policy, strategy or plan

Goals

Goals, objectives or targets related to nutrition:

Goal and main objectives
The fundamental goal of the NAOS Strategy is:
To promote a healthy diet and foster physical activity to invert the growing trend of the prevalence of obesity and thus to substantially reduce morbidity and mortality attributable to chronic diseases.

To achieve the proposed goal, the main objectives which are to be developed through the NAOS Strategy are as follows:

To promote policies and plans of action aimed at improving eating habits and increasing physical activity in the population. These policies should be sustainable, integral and reach a wide section of the society.

- Population awareness and information campaigns about the positive impact on health of a balanced diet and regular physical activity.
- To promote nutritional education at home, at school and in the community.
- To stimulate the practice of regular physical activity in the population, with special emphasis on schools.
- To favour a framework of collaboration with companies in the food industry to promote the production and distribution of products which contribute to a healthier and more balanced diet.
- To make professionals in the National Health System more aware in order to foster the systematic detection of obesity and problems of overweight in the population.
- To monitor the proposed measures and evaluate the results obtained as a consequence of the Strategy

Strategies

Strategies and activities related to nutrition:

Areas of intervention
The implementation of the NAOS Strategy requires, as previously mentioned, the cooperation of all sections of society. Few public health activities have such a multisectorial, multidisciplinary and multifactor involvement as that required to implement and manage this Strategy. Moreover it requires the effort to be sustained over the short, medium and long term.

Two fundamental pillars for achieving this: applying the Strategy to create an environment favouring a decided and sustainable change towards a healthier diet and the practice of regular physical activity.
Included are recommendations for action, to undertakings of specific measures in the following fields:

**Family and community**

Actions in this area:

- Information campaigns will be carried out to make the public more aware of the importance of physical activity and to promote regular activity as an alternative to sedentary leisure.
- Entertainment businesses, toy manufacturers and advertisers will be asked to collaborate, in the search for common initiatives aimed at promoting games requiring physical activity.
- Work groups will be set up, in the autonomous and municipal areas, responsible for designing initiatives to improve spaces for practising exercise and physical activity, safe bicycle lanes, skating rinks, pedestrian lanes. These groups should include the participation of management representatives from the town council, town planning department, leisure and sports activities, teachers, etc.

**At school**

Actions in this area:

- The inclusion in the academic curriculum of knowledge and skills related to diet and nutrition. Not only can these notions be included in the specific subjects (natural and social sciences and physical education) but they can also form part of other content (education for the citizen, etc.). This measure requires regulatory action proposed by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Autonomous Communities.
- To reinforce through workshops or extracurricular activities pupil initiation into the world of cooking and gastronomy, learning to buy, prepare and cook food. In this way positive habits are promoted favouring the acceptance and development of healthy eating habits, within a perspective of class equality.
- The inclusion in teacher training courses of teaching material and guides about diet and nutrition, and their effect on health, in addition to the importance of regular physical activity.
- To promote educational activities in collaboration with other sectors such as parent associations, the catering industry, foundations, etc.

**In business**

Actions in this area: To develop this collaboration, an agreement has been signed with the Spanish Federation of Food and Drink Industries (FIAB), the only business organisation in this sector in a national scale. The following undertakings have been agreed:

- Support for the Strategy and sponsors: the food industry will actively contribute to the efficient empowerment of the NAOS Strategy, placing all its scientific and technical knowledge at the disposition of the pursued objectives, together with its experience in understanding consumer demands and its communication capacity.
- It undertakes to promote, diffuse and support all those activities and publicity campaigns concerning lifestyles, nutrition, physical activity and health carried out by the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs.
- It will sponsor sporting events, promote sport, provide material and encourage physical activity, especially for children and young people.
- The food industry also undertakes to participate in the Observatory of Obesity, created by the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs, of a scientific and independent nature, from where the actions of the NAOS Strategy will be evaluated.

**The health system**

Actions in this area:

- To encourage doctors working in Primary Health Care to ask patients the necessary questions for detecting the risk of obesity in time, and to provide these patients with basic advice on food and physical exercise.
- To carry out regular campaigns for the early detection of overweight and obesity. The calculation of the body mass index (BMI), by
measuring weight and height, is the most accepted indicator in the scientific community for recognising whether the subject is overweight.

? To carry out strategies of information and assistance to prevent obesity in those groups which are more susceptible to rapid weight gain: individuals giving up a nicotine addiction; users of drugs which increase appetite, pregnant, breastfeeding or menopausal women; immigrant populations and marginalised groups.

? To promote breastfeeding in Primary Health Care Centres.

? To identify and monitor children potentially at risk: obesity in parents; overweight or underweight at birth; children of diabetic mothers or mothers who smoked during pregnancy; who have taken medication such as glucocorticoids, antiepileptics, antidepressants, and antipsychotics; etc.

M&E Indicators

M&E Indicators related to nutrition:

Evaluation and monitoring

The Administration proposes the creation of an Obesity Observatory which regularly quantifies and analyses the prevalence of obesity in the Spanish population, especially in the infant and young population, and measures the progress obtained in the prevention of this disease. This Observatory will ensure the necessary methodological homogeneity among the different epidemiological studies which are initiated, enabling comparison with other national and international studies and the obtaining of valid information concerning the evolution, trend and factors influencing and determining obesity.

Functions of the Observatory:

- To carry out epidemiological surveillance and monitoring of the obesity trend on a national scale, through the Autonomous Communities.
- To define the indicators that will be used to measure the impact of the interventions carried out. In this respect, it is collaborating with the WHO in the design and development of scientific indicators which enable the evaluation of the progressive execution of the NAOS Strategy on a national level.
- To develop specific objectives to be reached in each group of recommendations and to define the time required to achieve these.
- To collect together the different initiatives put into motion offering coordination and facilitating the exchange of experiences among the different groups. To also carry out the role of disseminator in all the initiatives and actions related with the Strategy.
- To demand a rigorous and permanent evaluation to identify the successful initiatives and to compare results, rejecting those interventions without impact and prioritising successful ones.
- To permit the identification of priorities in research.
- To establish relations with international bodies (WHO, European Commission, EFSA?) who enable the exchange of knowledge and experience concerning the prevention of obesity and the participation of different forums set up.
- To monitor the adherence to and application of the different self-regulation agreements.

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Reference:

Further notes:
The NAOS Strategy (Strategy for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention) was launched from the Ministry of Health, through the Spanish Food and Nutrition Agency in 2005 with objective of raising awareness of the problem that obesity poses to health, and encourage all initiatives that contribute to ensuring that citizens, especially children and youth adopt healthy lifestyle habits, primarily through diet healthy and regular practice of physical activity.
Policy topics:

- Overweight in children 0-5 yrs
- Overweight in adolescents
- Overweight in school children

Partners in policy implementation

- Government
  - Nutrition council
  - Health
  - Consumer affairs
- UN agencies
  - World Health Organization (WHO)

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