

## **Strategy for Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Obesity (Spain-Public-Private)**

**<http://www.msc.es/en/home.htm>**

### **Section I: Summary**

In response to the rising prevalence of obesity and other risk factors for chronic disease in the Spanish population, the Ministry of Health and Consumer Protection, in partnership with over 80 public and private entities, developed the Strategy for Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Obesity (NAOS). The primary goal of the strategy is to significantly reduce the incidence and effects of chronic diseases through the national promotion of a healthy diet and physical activity, particularly focused on obesity and unhealthy behaviors in children and adolescents. The multisectoral approach of the Strategy includes recommendations for actions in four sectors: family and community, schools, private sector, and the health system.

### **Section II: Statement of Purpose**

More than a third (38%) of the adult Spanish population and one fourth of children are overweight, and approximately 14% of the total population is obese. In comparison with other European countries, Spain has one of the highest rates of childhood obesity. The rising trends in obesity and overweight individuals have been attributed to a move away from the traditional Mediterranean diet to a higher calorie, higher fat diet and a growing tendency toward more sedentary lifestyles.

In response to these trends, in 2004 the Ministry of Health and Consumer Protection initiated a 12-month process to develop a national strategy to change dietary and exercise habits to reduce risk factors for chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. The Strategy for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Prevention of Obesity (NAOS) was developed collaboratively with input from over 80 public and private sector entities, including universities, foundations, medical associations, consumer associations and the media. Private sector participation included the food industry, sports, leisure and entertainment, catering, and restaurant chains.

Strategy interventions were targeted to four main sectors - family and community, schools, the private sector, and the health system - with the following objectives:

- Utilize the media to raise awareness and educate about the positive health impacts from exercise and healthy diet.
- Promote policies and actions to improve diet and exercise habits in the general population.
- Promote nutritional education at home, school, and in the community.

- Promote regular physical activity, with emphasis on schools.
- Establish a collaborative framework with the food industry to promote production and availability of healthier foods for a more balanced diet.
- Increase awareness and education among healthcare professionals about the problems of obesity and overweight in the population.
- Establish a mechanism to monitor and evaluate Strategy outcomes.

### **Section III: Outcomes**

An Obesity Observatory was established to monitor program initiatives, establish indicators to measure outcomes and identify further research priorities. The Observatory is comprised of actors from the Ministry of Health and Consumption, autonomous communities, local governments, science foundations and groups, private food and beverage companies, and consumer organizations. While no reports on outcomes have yet been released, a number of promising initiatives have been implemented as a result of the Strategy. In addition, the Strategy has been positively received, with significant commitment and contribution from the food and beverage industry.

Initiatives and actions implemented thus far in the four targeted areas of intervention include:

#### *Family and Community*

- Information and media campaigns to promote healthy diet and active lifestyles, including dissemination of materials such as guidelines for diet and exercise.
- Use of recognizable characters/brands to promote healthy behaviors.
- Support for creation of green spaces and sports facilities to encourage physical activity.

#### *Schools*

- Incorporation of nutrition education in school curricula.
- Increase in number of hours spent in physical activity.
- Halt in installation of vending machines in primary schools and elimination of unhealthy choices from existing machines. This was accomplished through an agreement with the National Spanish Association of Automatic Dispensers.
- Creation of nutritional standards for school catered meals.

#### *Private Sector*

- Voluntary participation, collaboration, and self-mandates from the food and beverage industry.
  - For example, the Federation of the Food and Beverage Industry implemented a nutrition label requirement for food and beverages.

- The Spanish Confederation of Bread Organizations agreed to lower the sodium content of bread over a four year period.
- Large supermarkets have committed to promoting the Strategy's goals and advertising products in line with the Strategy.
- Two of the countries biggest hotel and restaurant associations have agreed to provide nutritional information, increase fruit and vegetables in meals, and lower the saturated fat content.
- Assistance in developing and implementing physical activity programs.

#### *Health System*

- Training for healthcare professionals on the importance of preventing overweight and obesity.
- Education for healthcare professionals on warning signs and risk factors.
- Education on prenatal care and prevention of obesity at an early age.
- Targeted research on groups especially susceptible to weight gain, such as pregnant and menopausal women.

#### **Section IV: Additional Resources**

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