

Diet in childhood: A social and behavioural perspective

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Diet quality in childhood is important as it may impact on obesity and health later in life. The first years of life are also important for the development of taste and eating behaviours that could last up to adulthood. From birth to school age, the child has to adapt to different types of eating modes: breast milk or formula, the gradual introduction of different solid food, up to normal meals eaten with other members of the family. The age of transition from one eating mode to another is not necessarily based on the child physical readiness to do so. Moreover, children also have to adapt to different types of food at the kindergarten or in two different families when the parents are divorced. LSCDQ (ÉLDEQ) procures an inestimable source of information on these aspects. First, it gives us a better understanding of the relationship between the duration of breastfeeding and the quality of the diet at 1 and half and 2 and half years, measured by a short food frequency questionnaire. The analysis shows a strong relationship between social determinants (family income, parents level of education, family type, etc.) and the frequency of consumption of milk products, bread and cereals, fruits and vegetables and meat. The data also allows the description of some child behaviours at meal time (ie: eating too much, being picky, refusing to eat). The study of these behaviours is important as they are related with the frequency of consumption of fruits and vegetables. Children raised in poor family are especially at risk of suffering from food insecurity, which affects negatively the quality of their diet as well as the occurrence of infections. On long term, this could alter the health of the child as well as his development. These results give us a better understanding of the relationship between social inequalities, the quality of the diet and child development.