



Collation of measures and indicators

Indicator: Percentage of families who eat one meal together a day at least five days a week.

RICHE Code 240

Originating project – *Challenges and Findings in Measuring the Behavioural Determinants of Obesity in Children in Europe*

Operational definition

Percentage of families who eat one meal together a day at least five days a week.

Background

This indicator comes from *Challenges and Findings in Measuring the Behavioural Determinants of Obesity in Children in Europe*, which was part of the Scientific Platform of the Working Party on Information on Lifestyle and Specific Subpopulations by the Directorate General for Health and Consumer Protection of the European Commission.

Eating behaviour is strongly influenced by the family environment. Most children learn acceptable behaviour by copying the adults around them – they learn that eating vegetables and other healthy food is ‘good’ and existing on sugary, high fat foods is ‘bad’. In addition behaviour such as sitting down to eat is desirable and throwing food or eating very messily is not polite. Family mealtimes are the venue where new foods are introduced (and often need to be introduced repeatedly before the food is accepted by the child). In addition, children under the age of five are very often unpredictable about when they feel hungry, making this the one age group when snacks are an important – if not essential – part of a child’s diet (Alexander et al, 2010).

Technical criteria

Desirable data is number of families who eat together and the number of families in the sample of the survey. The resulting calculation can potentially be generalised to the population.

Data sources

Special surveys

Data availability

References

Alexander et al (2010) *Challenges and Findings in Measuring the Behavioural Determinants of Obesity in Children in Europe*. Huber, Bern.

