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Title

Ageing in Portugal: are there new nutritional challenges?

Abstract

Portuguese population is progressively ageing, due to lower fertility and to the increase of life expectancy, similarly to other EU countries. Some studies suggest that the Portuguese older adults might suffer from higher disabilities, risk of malnutrition and frailty, due to the high prevalence of non-communicable and/ or as a consequence of the socioeconomic conditions and the crisis from the last decade.

Until very recently, little was known about the nutritional status of the elderly and data from national surveys on food consumption was outdated. From 2015 to 2017 some projects especially focused in the problematics on older age and nutritional challenges, such as Pronutrisenior and Nutrition UP65, were developed in Portugal. Those studies aimed to search for a better understanding of the underlying determinants on nutritional status of the elderly population. Also, the second National Food Survey which was a National Food, Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey of the Portuguese general population, took place in 2015-2016. This allowed obtaining actual data on food consumption for all age groups. From the results of this national survey, it was possible to have a better understanding of the older adults' real consumption, with data from nutrients to food groups.

From the results of those recent projects it is possible to know the evolution and the new challenges, contributing to a better understanding of the underlying factors that affect nutritional status, health and well-being of the Portuguese older adult population.

Key references

Nutrition UP 65 – nutritional strategies facing an older demography: framework and methodological considerations. Acta Portuguesa de Nutrição; Vol:05; Pag. 8-11

National Food, Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey of the Portuguese general population. External Report EFSA-1341. December 2017.

Key messages

Older age adults continue at risk of deficiency for some micronutrients, which may be particularly relevant to the development of public health policies.

The daily distribution of the macronutrients for older people is unbalanced, reflecting poor food choices.

More effort has to be done by health professionals, namely Nutritionists/ Dietitians to promote healthy eating among older adults in Portugal.