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Title

School programmes in Austria: A combined behavioural and environmental intervention to promote healthy hydration

Abstract

Founded in 2005 the *Austrian Special Institute for Preventive Cardiology And Nutrition* (SIPCAN) has set itself the target of improving nutrition education, behaviour and the environment e.g. beverages offered at vending machines. Due to the existing infrastructure, school staff, facilities, policies, and environments, the school setting provides a logical choice as a context for implementing interventions to promote a healthy hydration. Thus SIPCAN is specialized in developing and implementing school programmes focusing on the target group of 10 to 18 year old students. At the moment the school programmes include three educational interventions ("Drinking & snack license", "Fitness is cool", and "Smart hydration") and three environmental interventions ("Vending machine check", "School cafeteria check", and "Lunch check"). The education is delivered by an on-staff teacher with whom the school children are familiar and it also aims to reach the school children's parents, to reinforce healthier hydration also in the home environment. Therefore, no specially trained professionals are required. Additionally, such interventions require a minimum of money, effort, school time and contain practical lessons regarding healthy nutrition and physical activity. In addition, by e.g. optimizing the vending machine, a reduction in the total mean sugar content of the beverages can be achieved and therefore the school environment is a feasible intervention in an appropriate setting. Consequently, a complete package of school-based education and improvement of the school environment is able to increase nutrition-related knowledge, dietary behaviour with decreases in the consumption of unhealthy beverages and with promoting healthy choices without bans. Last year every third school of the target group attended at least one of our programmes. More than 130.000 students benefit from these interventions.

Key messages

- Due to the existing infrastructure, school staff, facilities, policies, and environments, the school setting provides a logical choice as a context for implementing interventions to promote a healthy hydration.
- The education is delivered by an on-staff teacher with whom the school children are familiar. Therefore, no specially trained professionals are required.