

Bodily Characteristics and Lifestyle of Czech Children Aged 7.00 to 10.99 Years, Incidence of Childhood Obesity

Kovářová M.¹, Vignerová J.², Bláha P.¹, Ošancová K.²

¹ Chair of Human Anthropology and Genetics, Charles University, Prague

² National Institute of Public Health, Prague, Czech Republic

Summary

In 1999 - 2000 in the Czech Republic a survey of the prevalence of obesity was made. The assessment was made by the transversal method in elementary schools in all regions of the Czech Republic. Children aged 7.00 to 10.99 years were investigated. The survey comprised a total of 3362 children (1668 girls and 1694 boys). A total of 12 anthropometric dimensions were recorded and questionnaires addressed to the children and parents were analyzed.

From the results ensued that the ratio of obese children of both sexes in the CR (i. e. children with BMI values above the 97th percentile of the reference population) increased. This zone comprises 6.0% boys and 5.6% girls of the investigated group. An important finding was also the increase of mean values of the abdominal circumference of the children in all age groups in both sexes.

The ratio of obese children in different communities is related unequivocally to the size of the community. In smaller communities there are more obese children (according to our data 6.9%) and in large towns the ratio of obese children is 2.3%. In large towns there is also a greater proportion of thin children - 12.1 %, in small communities 8.6%.

It was found that there is a higher percentage of obese children in families where the mother has elementary education as compared with children of mothers with secondary and university education. Mothers with elementary education have 9.6% obese children while university educated mothers have only 3.7% obese children.

Analysis of the dietary questionnaires revealed that only 62.9% children in large towns eat breakfast, the position in villages is similar - 63.9%. In the group of children with excessive body weight fewer children have breakfast (only 54.1 %), in the group of children with a low body weight the majority eat breakfast (75.3%). The majority of children have a mid-morning snack at school which they bring from home. As regards school lunch the majority of children from large towns replied that they have lunch at school. The number of rural children who had school lunch was smaller. An afternoon snack is taken by less than half the children in different groups.

Key words: childhood obesity, somatic characteristics, lifestyle of Czech children

Address for correspondence: M. Kovářová, Chair of Human Anthropology and Genetics, Viničná 7, 128 44 Prague 2, Czech Republic