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## Study Regarding the Healthy and Sustainable Eating Practices Among Teenagers

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**Abstract:** Eating healthy and sustainably means choosing foods that support your long-term health while also being beneficial for the environment and the communities that produce them. It is a concept that combines balanced nutrition with responsibility towards the planet, and education for these values should begin at a young age.

### • Introduction

A study conducted at the Technological High School for the Food Industry in Timișoara aimed to analyze and evaluate the eating habits and responsible consumption practices of teenagers.

### • Material and method

The data was collected based on the responses of 92 students who completed a questionnaire on eating and consumption habits, and 71 students who filled out a dietary intake sheet.

The students were guided to explore their own habits and food choices for one day of the week, to analyze and intervene on the menu to improve it. They had to fill out a form with specific requirements:

- Identification of all foods and beverages consumed naturally on a day of the week (school day), at breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks between main meals, also taking into account quantities (g, portions, pieces, slices, ml/l etc.);
- Calculation of the total energy value (kcal/day) and the way of distributing energy throughout the day;
- Identification of how (and if) the main food groups are part of their daily diet;
- Analysis of the type of liquids and how the average water consumption/day covers the water requirement according to body mass;
- Comparison of the results with recommendations, studies on habits, healthy eating practices;
- Identification of healthy choices and improvement/change of unhealthy ones; development of a plan for implementing a good habit, identification of possible obstacles, challenges in changing eating habits.

### • Results and discussions

- The main findings from the analysis of teenagers' eating and responsible consumption habits are:
  - Over 15% of students skip breakfast;
  - More than half of the students (56%) choose to snack on high-calorie foods between meals (chips, chocolate, chocolate bars, chocolate-filled pastries, cookies, etc.);
  - 75% of students do not eat fruit at all or eat at most one piece of fruit per day;
  - Over 50% of students do not consume vegetables—cooked, fresh, or in salads;
  - 26% of students do not include dairy products in their meals;
  - Half of the students listed fast food items such as pizza, sandwiches, burgers, etc., as their main meals;
  - Over 50% of students reported consuming soft drinks and energy drinks;
  - Among the favorite sweets of the students are: chocolate, chocolate-filled pastries, cream-filled cookies, chocolate bars, ice cream, etc.;
  - More than 50% of the surveyed students do not read or rarely read product labels before purchasing;
  - Fewer than one-third of the students said they are concerned with reducing food waste;
  - Fewer than one-third of students said they choose a healthier or less polluting product, even if it is more expensive.

### • Conclusions

For young people and teenagers, eating healthily represents a challenge considering that their food choices are often chaotic due to a fast-paced and frequently disorganized lifestyle. Their food choices are primarily based on emotions, cravings, or pleasures rather than real needs. Additionally, the presence of fast food outlets near schools, the lack of consistent health and sustainability education programs, the abundance of advertisements for sensorially appealing (and cheaper) but nutritionally poor products (that can even cause imbalances in the body), are all sufficient reasons for teenagers to become future subscribers to chronic illnesses—heart disease, strokes, cancer, diabetes, obesity, etc.

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