

Title Promotion of fruits and vegetables consumption among youngsters through the use of minimally processed products

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Abstract

In the last decades a revolution occurred within the family structure. An increasing number of people have at least one meal in the day away from home. In 2003 an international review panel for WHO and the FAO concluded that with an increased consumption of fruit and vegetables there is convincing evidence of reduced risk of CVD, a probable reduced risk of some cancers, diabetes and obesity, as well as association with the prevention and alleviation of several micronutrient deficiencies. The review panel recommended that a daily intake of fresh fruit and vegetables should achieve a minimum of 400g per day. According to Pro Children project in spite of not reaching the recommendations Portugal showed the highest overall fruit and vegetable intake of 264g. Consumer demand an increasingly varied range of high quality food together with food safety assurance, and at the same time they require that food should be quick and easy to prepare. This scenario created an opportunity for a new category of products: minimally processed fruits and vegetables. The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of increasing availability of fresh cut fruits and vegetables at Oporto high schools aiming to contribute for promotion of their consumption and evaluate a potential impact of these products to the equilibrium of the diet. This was performed by questioning Portuguese students, about the use of these products and the reasons for their options/barrier for choosing this kind of products. Several barriers were mentioned by responders to justify the low consumption of traditional fruits and vegetables, namely low availability at school and leisure times and low parental facilitation at home, concerning fresh cut fruits and vegetables the referred barriers were related to price, reduced shelf life, lack of trust on this kind of products, unknown benefits of this products, availability of less nutritious items considered by young people to be most fashion, alternatives, such as snacks, sweets and candies. Busy lives styles can benefit from food that is nutritious, yet easy to eat on-the-go, like fresh cut fruits and vegetables. Children and younger's at school can make use of this alternative in order to improve the quality of the diet. A promotion of this new category of products is necessary among younger's, parents and school employees to show the potential role of minimal processed products on improving the nutritional food intake.