

FOOD INFORMATION AND AWARENESS FOR THE IMMIGRANTS

Pilot project for new integration steps in the Province of Viterbo

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Alimentation is a primary need, closely linked to man's life.

We eat because, with the food, we introduce in our body what we need to live: nutritive principles (nutrients) and the necessary energy that our body requires for all the activities; the only form of energy that the “human machine” is capable to use is the one contained in food.

Everyday we need it in a certain quantity which varies from person to person, depending on the sex, the age and the activities practised. Nutrients are substances that accomplish specific tasks in the organism and ensure growth, a good functioning of all the activities of the body and the preservation of health.

Nutrients are the following:

- carbohydrates
- proteins
- fats
- vitamins and minerals
- water

These nutrients can be found in more or less every food but in different quantities from one to the other: not a single aliment contains them all in the required amount, therefore, the “complete” or “perfect” food, capable to satisfy by itself all our nutritive needs, does not exist. On the other hand, the “irreplaceable” aliment does not exist either because each type of food possesses some nutritional values that we can also find in others. Consequently, the easiest and safest way to guarantee the right amount of supply of all the essential nutritious substances **is to vary as much as possible the choice of foods and to mix them correctly**. Such a behaviour not only means that the taste will be better satisfy and the monotony of flavours will be overcome, but also the risk of nutritional and eventual consequential metabolic disorders will be avoided.

An instrument used to quickly and practically indicate how to eat correctly is represented by a symbolics.

FOOD PYRAMID

Fig. 1 is based on the division of food, following their belonging to the different groups of nutrients indispensable to the human organism.



Grassi e dolciumi = Fats and sweets
 Latte e yogurt= Milk and yoghurt
 Carne e derivati = Meat and by-products
 Verdure = Vegetables
 Frutta = Fruits
 Carboidrati = Carbohydrates

Fig. 2 is constructed on a daily use of food to be eaten ; on the top, the food to be consumed with moderation.



Bevande = Drinks
 acqua 6 bicchieri al giorno = water 6 glasses per day
 vino 1 bicchiere scarso a pasto = wine 1 glass per day
 mensile = monthly
 settimanale = weekly
 quotidiano = daily

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND WEIGHT

Do not forget to control your body weight and to keep fit. The weight represents the tangible expression of the energy balance between the supply and the elimination of calories. The energy is introduced through the food and used by the body during resting periods as well as during physical activity.

FOOD DISEQUILIBRIUM AND PATHOLOGIES

Overweight and obesity

A sedentary style of life as well as qualitatively and quantitatively bad food habits are the main causes of obesity. In the cases of overweight and obesity, low energy-giving food like fruits, vegetables, complex carbohydrates and aliments richer in fibres made with wholemeal cereals must be favoured. This choice of food increases the sense of satiety, while the supply of calories decreases. It is obvious that a major physical activity must be added contemporarily to this nutritional change.

Diabetes

The type 2 diabetes, or insulin-independent, is the more diffused form of diabetes in the world and breaks out in the adult age because of food disequilibrium. The consumption of complex carbohydrates, most of all legumes and cereals, is recommended. Wholemeal products such as vegetables, provide the food fibres that balance the sugar absorption, avoiding the outbreak of a sudden peak of glycaemia after the meal. As to the simple carbohydrates, it is necessary to control the supply of fruits, milk and sugar.

Cardiovascular diseases

Numerous food habits are considered at the root of the growth of these pathologies: particularly, the poor consumption of fruits and vegetables and a large consumption of food rich in saturated fats, cholesterol and salt. The saturates, especially those found in animal fats increase the so-called “bad cholesterol” in the blood. This is the reason why it is to prefer vegetable fats in the diet, especially the extra-virgin olive oil. A poor consumption of fried food and a high one of fish is also recommended. To reduce the salt is another important nutritional factor to prevent cardiovascular diseases because high blood pressure is one of the main causes linked to heart attack.

Cancer

Numerous factors contribute to the development of cancer, but it seems that, in industrialized Countries, dietetic factors could be the cause of 30% of cancers. Overweight and obesity, alcohol as well as tinned and salted meat are some of the factors that increase cancer incidence. The most important preventive factor is the consumption of fruits and vegetables.

THE CORRECT DIET FOR THE BABY AND THE CHILD

The World Health Organization and UNICEF encourage breast feeding until 4-6 months of life of the baby, after that the mother’s milk should be supported by other aliments. Mother’s milk is specific and capable to satisfy the baby’s necessities, it provides the necessary antibodies to protect him from infections, its is easily-digestive, sterile and ready at the right temperature. From a psychological point of view, the baby’s breast suction establishes a close symbiotic relationship between mother and child in which he/she feels secure and protected. **It is fundamental that, during breast feeding, the mother follows a varied diet;** this will make the weaning easier because it gets the child used to different nutritive substances.

Exclusive breast feeding protracted until one year of age or more does not guarantee the supply of the necessary nutritive principles for a correct body growth. Likewise, it is wrong to use cow’s milk before the baby is 6 months old in substitution of mother’s or powder milk because the level of digestibility of the first one is lower and the risk of allergic reactions is well known. The weaning is

certainly a very delicate moment of the child's growth because it marks the interruption of the symbiotic relationship between mother and child.

A correct weaning protects the child from allergies and intolerances of food.

At the beginning (at around the 5th month), one meal of milk will be replaced by a first baby meal prepared with a vegetable broth (500 gr. of water, carrots, courgettes, potatoes. Boil until the water is reduced by half and drain it off). Rice cream or cereals can be added to the vegetable broth.

After one month the evening milk meal can also be replaced by a baby meal, reaching then to two milk meals and to two baby meals. This way, all the nutrients needed by the child to grow correctly, are provided: the calcium contained in the milk is useful for the bones, the proteins of the meat for the muscular system, the iron contained in the meat and in the vegetables for the synthesis of haemoglobin which constitutes the blood, fruits and vegetables guarantee the support of vitamins and mineral salts.

The child's alimentation

A correct alimentation protects the adult from numerous illnesses.

Due to the fact that in the majority of cases, children, sons or daughters of immigrants, as well as women are inclined to adapt themselves to the occidentals' food habits, they will tend to develop the classical degenerative illnesses due to a type of diet rich in proteins, fats and glucides.

The quantity of food required to carry out the vital functions of a healthy child is decided by himself: in fact, an instinctive self-regulation mechanism exists by the means of some centres in the brain that, through the pangs of hunger and the sense of satiety, induce the subject to regulate autonomously the quantity of food to be eaten. During breast-feeding also, the rigid method of the double weighing is not recommended. Usually the new-born is free to take as much milk as he/she wants, even the number of feeds can vary according to his/her individual needs.

A too strict imposition concerning the hours of feeding and the quantity of food to be eaten can alter the natural self-regulation stimulus. It is better to teach to the almost grown-up child to respect the meals hours by means of the adults' example, so that the meals become a ritual occasion for the family to gather together, indispensable for a correct psychophysical development.

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