

## **Development of excessive body weight in children - an analysis of data from two provincial capitals in Poland**

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### **Introduction**

The number of overweight and obese children is constantly increasing globally, also in Poland, reaching around 15% of school-aged children. It's an alarming information, due to the well-known health consequences of excessive body weight.

### **Aim of study**

To analyse the risk factors for the development of obesity, taking into the account results from two provincial capitals in Poland, Szczecin and Białystok.

### **Materials and methods**

A survey was administered to a group of parents of children aged 2-17. Eighty responses, picked at random, were qualified for further analysis according to the exclusion criteria. Forty children were from Szczecin, and forty from Białystok.

### **Results**

In the study group comprised of eighty children, 24% of them were overweight ( $\geq 85$  percentile), from which 58% were from Białystok. For the purpose of analysis, only the children with an excessive body weight were evaluated. About 63% of children had over five full meals a day, not including snacking, and roughly 42% of children consumed two main meals per day, one at home and another one at their educational institution. Nearly all parents and children declared to snack during the day. Fluid intake reported by almost a half of children and their parents amounted to 0.5-1L per day. The percentage of physically active children who exercise a minimum of thirty minutes a day, at least 3-4 times a week is 74%. However, 47% of their parents report to lead a lifestyle with little or no physical activity. A total of 79% of parents do not exercise with children. When asked about the sources of information on healthy lifestyle 84% of parents admitted that they do not consult a doctor. Comparison of data gathered from the two provincial capitals has shown a few differences. More children from Białystok (mainly 73% of them), as compared to Szczecin, consume five full meals per day. However, children from Szczecin were reported to snack more often. It has also been noted that, in comparison to Szczecin, more children from Białystok (mainly 82%) exercise the established minimum of thirty minutes a day, 3-4 times a week. Another interesting finding was that while in Szczecin 62% of parents reported never to have consulted a doctor regarding their lifestyle, a surprising 100% of examinees from Białystok claimed so as well.

### **Conclusions**

Obesity is generally caused by overeating and lack of physical activity. The factors which primarily contribute to an excessive body weight include family's daily habits. The lifestyle differences between the two regions of the same country are clearly visible.