Abstract

Given the dramatic increase in the prevalence of obesity and the serious health and economic consequences, the scientific community, health professionals and health agencies are looking for the best strategies to prevent/ fight this trend. In order to plan the most appropriate intervention measures the first step is to identify the associated factors of obesity. This paper presents the results of research conducted/coordinated by our research team and promoted by the Spanish Food Safety Agency (AESAN), in the last five years. These studies were focussed on representative samples of the Spanish population, paying attention to the condition of overweight/obesity and their associated factors. The first study, FANPE (“Fuentes alimentarias de nutrientes de la población española”) (2009), was centered in 418 adults (18-60 years) from 15 provinces (30 sampling points). Its aim was to analyze the dietary sources of nutrients, paying particular attention to sodium. This research showed that the risk of overweight/obesity increases with age, in people who have follow weight control diets, in ex-smokers, married people and those who slept less than 8.5 hours per day, while the risk is lower in women, people who make sport and those with an University degree. It was also found that overweight people had higher sodium intake and urine excretion. Therefore, and having in mind that 88.2% of the subjects took more than 2 g/day of sodium (the maximum recommended), it is advised to lower the sodium intake not only from the health point of view but also as a probably strategy against obesity. The study ALADINO (Estudio de Alimentación, Actividad física, Desarrollo Infantil y Obesidad- Study of the Diet, Physical Activity, Child Development and Obesity) (2010-2011) was focused on 7659 children (6-9 years) from 19 autonomous communities. We founded a higher percentage of overweight/obesity in boys than in girls, and a significant increase in the figures from the age of 7. Being overweight is more evident in offspring of parents with low educational level or low income, or if parents are smokers (especially when both parents smoke). The problem increases in those children who skip breakfast, have lunch at home (compared with having this meal at school), in those with sports facilities far from their home, those who have a personal computer, video game or TV in their room, or those who sleep less than 8 hours per day. All these factors, either by themselves or because they influence eating habits and/or activity patterns, are associated with a higher risk of being overweight, so it must be monitored and modified in a more favourable direction, within the health policies of each country, as part of strategies to halt the rise in obesity condition.

Keywords
Obesity, Overweight, Risk factors, Spanish children, Spanish adults.