Abstract

Objectives: The aims of this study were: (i) to ascertain whether the nutritional status of a population of secondary school students had improved after an educational intervention; (ii) to analyze whether students had adopted healthier eating and exercise habits after participating in a health education intervention; (iii) to discover whether the students spent less time on sedentary leisure activities after the intervention. Sample and methodology: The population of the sample consisted of 138 adolescents, age range was between 14-19 years old: 67 males (48.6%) and 71 females (51.4%). They were students at two public secondary schools in the city of Almería (Spain). In the first phase (15-30 September 2011) of this three-phase study, the nutritional status of the students was assessed by means of anthropometry. In the second phase (1 October 2012-15 June 2012), the students participated in an educational intervention that fomented awareness of the benefits derived from healthy eating habits and physical exercise. In the third and final phase (16-31 June 2012), the effectiveness of the intervention was evaluated. Results: After the intervention, statistically significant differences (p < 0.000) were found in relation to the nutritional status of all the students evaluated, regardless of their sex. In reference to the adoption of healthy habits after the intervention, statistical significant differences were observed in the Krece Plus test (p < 0.000) and in the practice of physical exercise (p = 0.006). In the case of sedentary leisure activities, there was also a statistically significant reduction (p < 0.000) in the number of hours spent watching television for both male and female subjects. Conclusion: The results of this study show the effectiveness of the contents, activities, and duration of this health education intervention to encourage the subjects to modify their dietary and exercise habits.

Keywords

Health education intervention, Obesity, Adolescents, Nutritional state, Physical activity, Leisure activity, Sedentary.