Abstract

Background: Changing lifestyle habits is considered the principal measure for the control of blood pressure and obesity. The aim of this study was to characterize the eating habits, anthropometric characteristics, physical fitness and blood pressure of students of health science degrees during the first three academic years and to explore the relation between the aforementioned parameters.

Methods: This was a longitudinal study conducted over three years on the eating habits and physical fitness of health science students (n=366) and the influence of these factors on blood pressure and obesity. Results: The mean food group intakes of both female and male participants corresponded to a high consumption of lean and fatty meat, sweets and pastries and a low consumption of cereals, fruits, vegetables, olive oil, fish, nuts and vegetables. Blood pressure and obesity-related parameters were within normal ranges and did not change over the study period. Aerobic capacity values increased in men from the beginning to the end of the study, while V0 2 max decreased in women between the first and second years. Conclusion: We note that, in both women and men, blood pressure values were lower when diet was high in vegetables, legumes, nuts, fish and olive oil. In both sexes, we found a negative correlation between aerobic capacity and systolic and diastolic blood pressure and a positive correlation between obesity and blood pressure. The pattern of the eating habits and changes therein were different in young women and men, the former being focused on improving their diet and the latter on improving their physical fitness.

Keywords