Establishing a common Nordic monitoring system on diet

by

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Objective

The Nordic Council of Ministers endorsed the Nordic Plan of Action of Better Health and Quality of Life through diet and physical activity in 2006, which included a decision on developing a simple and low cost common Nordic monitoring system on diet, physical activity and overweight. A Nordic working group has discussed and suggested the ingredients of such a system, which needs to be simple, low cost and based on indicators. Only the issues of monitoring the diet are discussed here.

Methods

Based on presentations of existing surveys, practical experience, literature and analyses on Nordic national dietary survey data, the working group has discussed both practical and scientific issues of which indicators of diet to include in a future monitoring system.

Results

Analyses of diet in Iceland, Finland and Denmark showed that validated food indicators already used in Sweden will suite for monitoring nutrients of interest. The indicators are major sources of fat, saturated fat, sugar and dietary fibre and explain the variation in the contribution to the total diet.

Discussions of physical activity indicators have resulted in decision on approx. 6 indicators of physical activity to be implemented in the future monitoring system.

The working group suggests a monitoring system based on telephone interviews. The system will include 15 indicators of diet based on a food frequency questionnaire (fat on bread, fats used in cooking, types of bread, fruit and vegetables, pommes frites/fried potatoes, fish and seafood, sausages, candy and chocolate, cakes and biscuits, full-fat cheese, fruit and vegetable juice, soft drinks, sugared and light). Validation studies of both diet and physical activity are planned for 2009-2010.

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The dietary indicators will be validated against 7 d record in Iceland (n=200) and Denmark (n=450) in the autumn 2009 in children, adolescents and adults. The indicators of physical activity (PA) will be validated against accelerometry in Norway, Iceland and Finland.

**Conclusions**

It is possible to agree on the same indicators of diet and PA in the Nordic countries enabling a common monitoring system to be started.