



Report of the Scientific Committee of the Spanish Agency for Consumer Affairs, Food Safety and Nutrition (AECOSAN) on recommendations for physical activity within the framework of the NAOS Strategy

Section of Food Safety and Nutrition

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Reference number: AECOSAN-2015-005

Report approved by the Section of Food Safety and Nutrition of the Scientific Committee on plenary session
September, 23rd 2015

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Summary

The Scientific Committee of the Spanish Agency for Consumer Affairs, Food Safety and Nutrition (AECOSAN) published in 2014 a report on objectives and nutritional recommendations and physical activity to combat obesity in the framework of the NAOS Strategy, suggesting that “national strategies and intersectorial measures should be drawn up aimed at the promotion of physical activity as a beneficial agent for health in line with national legislation and practice; that is, there should be a national recommendation for physical activity to benefit health” and recommending “the establishment of a general framework in Spain containing certain general directives on the characteristics of the physical activity that each segment of the population should adopt in order to remain healthy during the different stages of their life (childhood and adolescence, adults and the elderly) and which might serve as a guide to the strategies promoted by the regional communities”.

In addition, national recommendations have been presented for physical activity for health, the reduction of sedentary lifestyle and screen time for the whole population. This is the result of collaboration between the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, through the Higher Council for Sport, and within the framework of the National Health System’s Strategy for the Promotion of Health and Prevention.

The Scientific Committee of AECOSAN has assessed both documents and concluded that the recommendations listed in the document “Physical activity for health and the reduction of a sedentary lifestyle. Recommendations for the population”, under the framework of the National Health System’s Strategy for the Promotion of Health and Prevention from the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality are in line with those made by the Scientific Committee of AECOSAN in 2014 and contain areas of interest. They may therefore be assumed within the NAOS Strategy

for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Health in order to, in accordance with their objectives, promote physical activity and contribute to reversing the growing trend of obesity prevalence and, consequently, to reducing the morbidity and mortality rates attributed to chronic illness.

Keywords

Physical activity, NAOS, sedentary lifestyle, health.

1. Introduction

In line with WHO (World Health Organization), the NAOS Strategy for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Health, which was created in 2005, sets out encouraging healthy eating and promoting physical activity as its fundamental goals. This is in order to reverse the growing trend of obesity prevalence and substantially reduce morbidity and mortality attributed to chronic illnesses.

In this respect, Law 17/2011, of July, 5th on Food Safety and Nutrition, in article 36 on the NAOS Strategy indicated that “in the Strategy the nutritional objectives and targets for physical activity for the population shall be established together with those for the reduction of the prevalence of obesity”.

Subsequently in 2014, the Scientific Committee of the Spanish Agency for Consumer Affairs, Food Safety and Nutrition (AECOSAN) published a report on the objectives as well as on the nutritional and physical activity recommendations to combat obesity in the framework of the NAOS Strategy. In this report, it was suggested that “national strategies and intersectorial measures should be drawn up aimed at the promotion of physical activity as a beneficial agent for health in line with national legislation and practice. Therefore, there should be a national recommendation on physical activity to benefit health”. In addition, it was recommended “the establishment of a general framework in Spain containing certain general directives on the characteristics of the physical activity that each segment of the population should adopt in order to remain healthy during the different stages of their life (childhood and adolescence, adulthood and the elderly). This recommendation might serve as a guide to the strategies promoted by the regional communities” (AECOSAN, 2014).

The document “Physical Activity for health and the reduction of a sedentary lifestyle. Recommendations for the population” was recently presented in the framework of the National Health System’s Strategy for the Promotion of Health and Prevention from the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality (MSSSI, 2015).

Therefore, and considering that the Recommendations for Physical Activity issued in the framework of the National Health System’s Strategy for the Promotion of Health and Prevention are up-to-date, based on scientific evidence and are coherent with those issued by international organisations such as WHO, the Section of Food Safety and Nutrition of the Scientific Committee of AECOSAN has been asked to assess whether these recommendations are in line with the suggestions made by the Scientific Committee in the framework of the NAOS Strategy.

2. Objectives and recommendations for Physical Activity made by the Scientific Committee of AECOSAN in the framework of the NAOS Strategy

The report issued by the Scientific Committee relating to the objectives and recommendations for physical activity revised the currently available recommendations and objectives with respect to physical activity in different countries including France, the United Kingdom, the Nordic countries and the United States, and the recommendations made by WHO.

Finally, the recommendations for physical activity made by the Scientific Committee of AECOSAN were as follows:

1. National strategies need to be established and multi-sectoral measures aimed at promoting health enhancing physical activity in accordance with national legislation and practices; i.e., there should be a national recommendation on health enhancing physical activity.
2. The programmes or action plans to meet the WHO minimum recommendation concerning health enhancing physical activity should share the objective of increasing:
 - The percentage of adults that engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week or 75 minutes of high-intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination.
 - The percentage of children and adolescents that engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to high-intensity physical activity each day or at least five days a week.
3. National reference centres need to be designated for health enhancing physical activity, pursuant to national legislation and practices. These centres shall be responsible for specifically coordinating the process of making the data on physical activity available for the monitoring framework; these data shall be included in the WHO European database for nutrition, obesity and physical activity; and they shall also enable cooperation between services in relation to HEPA (promote health-enhancing physical activity) policies.

3. Recommendations for Physical Activity issued in the framework of the National Health System's Strategy for the Promotion of Health and Prevention

The National Health System's Strategy for the Promotion of Health and Prevention (MSSSI, 2013) included in the "Implementation Process" section the need to provide continuity to the joint work with the sports sector, strengthening the frameworks of collaboration between the health sector and the sports sector, started some years ago with the drafting of the Integral Plan for Physical Activity and Sport (Plan A+D) (CSD, 2010) the primary objective of which was to significantly increase the level of sport practiced.

As a result of the collaboration between the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, through the Higher Council of Sport, and in the framework of the National Health System's Strategy for the Promotion of Health and Prevention, the national recommendations for Physical Activity for Health and the reduction of a Sedentary Lifestyle and Screen Time for the whole population are presented (MSSSI, 2015).

These recommendations are summarised in the following table:

Table 1. Summary of recommendations for physical activity, the reduction of a sedentary lifestyle and screen time

Age Group		Recommendations for Physical Activity	Observations	Reducing Sedentary Lifestyles	Limiting Screen Time
Under 5 years old	Non-walkers	Several times a day	Encourage movement, active play and enjoy	Minimise time spent sitting or secured in pushchairs, when they are awake to less one hour continuously	<1 year old: Not recommended to spend time in front of screen From 2 to 4 years old: Screen time should be limited to less than 1 hour a day
	Walkers	At least 180 minutes per day Any intensity	Activities and games that develop basic motor skills (running, jumping, climbing, throwing, swimming,...) in various settings (at home, in the park, the pool, etc.)		
5 to 17 years old		At least 60 minutes per day	Include, at least 3 days per week, vigorous intensity activity and activity to fortify muscles and improve bone mass	Reduce prolonged sedentary periods Promote the use of active transport and activities in the open air	Limit time of use of screens for recreational purposes to a maximum of 2 hours a day
Adults		At least 150 minutes of moderate activity per week or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week or a combination equivalent to the above These recommendations may be reached by totalling periods of at least 10 continuous minutes each session	At least twice a week, activities to strengthen muscles and improve bone mass and activities to improve flexibility Persons over the age of 65, especially with problems of mobility: at least 3 times per week, and activities to strengthen muscles and to improve balance	Reduce prolonged sedentary periods of more than 2 hours continuously, taking active breaks every 1 or 2 hours with short stretching sessions or taking a short walk Encourage active transport	Limit time spent in front of screen

Source: (MSSI, 2015).

4. Consistency of the recommendations

The recommendations for physical activity listed in the document "Physical activity for health and the reduction of a sedentary lifestyle. Recommendations for the population" (MSSSI, 2015) are broadly speaking consistent with those listed in the previous report of the Scientific Committee of the AECOSAN as both are based on the recommendations made by WHO.

Nevertheless, this new document sheds light on certain aspects including specific recommendations for children under the age of five years (whether or not they are able to walk), and also for women during pregnancy and after delivery.

In addition, the broad outline of the recommendations specifies three basic sections: physical activity, reducing sedentary lifestyles and limiting screen time, which may help to clarify the changes suggested in behaviour.

Another area of interest is that the document lists the need to promote activities in the open air. There is evidence to suggest that adequate levels of vitamin D (in which sunlight plays an important role) enhance the absorption of calcium with a positive effect on muscular activity.

Conclusions of the Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee of AECOSAN concludes that the recommendations listed in the document "Physical activity for health and the reduction of a sedentary lifestyle. Recommendations for the population" in the framework of the National Health System's Strategy for the Promotion of Health and Prevention from the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality are in line with those made by the Scientific Committee of AECOSAN in 2014.

Consequently, they consider that the recommendations given in the document "Physical activity for health and the reduction of a sedentary lifestyle. Recommendations for the population" may be assumed within the NAOS Strategy on Nutrition, Physical Activity and Health in order to, in accordance with their objectives, promote physical activity and contribute to reversing the growing trend of obesity prevalence and, consequently reducing the morbidity and mortality rates attributed to chronic illness.

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