

EDITORIAL

Reducing the burden of overweight and obesity is a public health policy priority for most developed countries and prevention is the only useful approach combined with a good cost-benefit ratio. Nowadays strong evidence exists of overweight tracking from childhood into adulthood with as nearly as 20% of school-aged children and 50% of adults obese or overweight in Europe. This volume focuses on different heterogeneous aspects of children's health, but in particular the relationship between early infant feeding and body composition in Pre-school children. The consumption of specific foods may result in the epigenetic modification of metabolic programming; moreover a hormonal link between the duration of exclusive breastfeeding and the introduction of complementary feeding with the subsequent development of overweight and obesity has been suggested. The WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months of age, after which breastfeeding should continue but appropriate complementary foods should be introduced in a timely fashion. Breastfeeding elicits the newborn's self-control in food intake and provides hormonal factors able to control hunger. During the complementary feeding period high energy intakes and high intakes of protein, in particular animal protein, have been associated with an increase in childhood BMI. On the other hand no clear association has been found between the timing of introduction of complementary food and BMI, however very early introduction of solid foods (< 4 months of age) may result in an increase in body mass index.

In Italy the health service is provided with family paediatricians, whose aim other than providing medical assistance should be parents' and children's education towards prevention of future pathologies. Parents and children have to be directed towards a proper nutrition since the child birth, knowledge of the epigenetic abilities of nutrients is the key.

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