

Help for European children to resist unhealthy temptations

November 30 2012



Children and young people in Europe are exposed to all kinds of fast food, crisps and fizzy drinks – so how can they learn to resist the temptation to indulge?

Photo: Colourbox.

Children and young people in Europe are exposed to all kinds of fast food, crisps and fizzy drinks – so how can they learn to resist the temptation to indulge?

This is the question that the European research project TEMPEST was set up to answer. The research project involves researchers from nine European countries and one of the team members is Liliya Nureeva, a [PhD student](#) at Aarhus University.

The TEMPEST research project has prepared strategies for children to use to suppress or control their desire to scoff sweets and snacks. One of the main objectives of the project is to contribute to dealing with the increasing problem of overweight among children and teenagers in Europe by providing the target group members with tools they can use to

avoid the unhealthy foods that is so readily available to them.

"Children and teenagers need to know more about health and the tools available so that they themselves can become involved in defining their diets and [eating habits](#)," explains Liliya Nureeva from the Department of Business Administration at Aarhus University.

Tools to help resist temptation The researchers have designed a number of strategies based on the data collected from nine [European countries](#). One consistent theme in the project is that children are to be involved in integrating the strategies into their everyday lives and thus play an active role in their own health and lifestyle.

"Some children find it easiest to control their [dietary habits](#) simply by avoiding [unhealthy snacks](#) altogether, while others prefer to use [distractions](#) to forget their desire for sweet treats. Still others prepare their own rules stating that they have to eat some fresh fruit every day, or that they are only allowed to eat sweets at weekends," explains Liliya Nureeva, who continues:

"Children need to be aware of the strategies that work for them, as this will allow them to take active steps to control their intake of [unhealthy foods](#)."

Strategies for children

Highlighting the unhealthy parts of children's and teenagers' lifestyles and then finding strategies to help them change their ways is a very complex problem. For example, it involves building up knowledge about what people find tempting – and when – and then identifying ways to avoid or resist the temptation. The next step is to establish how to set goals and rules to help break away from the unhealthy lifestyle.

According to Liliya Nureeva, parents, school teachers and others who are in close contact with children and teenagers may tell them about the different strategies and explain how they can integrate these strategies into their everyday lives.

At the end of this year, TEMPEST will be publishing a handbook that will be available to parents and others able to help children use the strategies actively.

Provided by Aarhus University

Citation: Help for European children to resist unhealthy temptations (2012, November 30)
retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-11-european-children-resist-unhealthy-temptations.html>

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