

Deliverable D7.1:

Report: Literature review on factors influencing parental dietary habits

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BACKGROUND

Nutrition interventions aiming to develop healthy eating patterns seem to be more successful in early stages of life, even before birth. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of studies evaluating the changes in foods and dietary habits from a life-course perspective, particularly across the different stages of early parenthood. Indeed, the absence of theory-based research examining the impact of parenthood on motives for eating behaviour has resulted in a general lack of awareness of how these variables may differ from that of the general population.

KEY FINDINGS

The literature is ambiguous concerning the impact of early parenthood on eating behaviours. There is some evidence showing that parenthood is associated with certain improvements in diet, such as breakfast consumption, intention to buy more organic foods, more fruits and vegetables and to have regular meal time. However, the majority of the studies reported a prominent drop in dietary quality when adults become parents, including a higher consumption of discretionary foods rich in saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium and sugar. The main factors of influence and barriers for healthier eating described by parents were categorized in three main domains: **1) Personal factors:** time scarcity and perceived time pressure, negligence of one's own health and nutrition, low self-efficacy for food-related activities, negative emotions, knowledge on healthy eating, negative body image; **2) Socio-economic factors:** unhealthy preference of family members, financial constraints, lack of support for food-related activities, social visits and visiting; **3) Environmental structural factors:** marketing strategies, unhealthy work environment, low durability of fresh foods.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The reviewed studies shed light on the undeniable impact early parenthood elicits on adults' eating behaviours. Although the majority of the studies pointed to a downturn in the healthiness of eating, there is at least some research indicating that the transition to parenthood holds

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great potential to take adults towards healthier choices. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that what is known about changes in eating behaviours when adults become parents is based largely on quantitative studies evaluating dietary intake in demographically homogeneous contexts. Against this backdrop, WP7 includes a 3-year study on factors influencing new parents' healthy eating behaviours.

FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://edulia.eu/esr8-factors-influencing-expecting-and-new-parents-healthy-eating-behavior-preschoolers/>