

From Science 2 School: Sustainably healthy – active & veggy. Science transferred to healthy actions in the Austrian secondary school setting.



Figure. Logo „From Science 2 School“ (©Katharina C. Wirnitzer)

Introduction. Health is one of the great topics for the future in education, matching the UN “Sustainable Development Goals” No 3 “Good Health and Well-Being” and No 4 “Quality Education”. Physical inactivity and overweight have been identified as global health issues of urgent concern. 30 % of Austrian children are overweight and 85 % fail to achieve the recommended 60 min/day of exercise. 44 % of people under 24 viewing a vegetarian/vegan lifestyle as cooler than smoking, 30 % of 18-24 yr-olds in the UK either having considered or already being vegetarian/vegan. 10 % of Austrians eat vegetarian or vegan (880,000). However, there is no information about the trends on plant-based diets of pupils and teachers. Therefore, this study aims to determine the prevalence of omnivorous, vegetarian and vegan diets among Austrian pupils and teachers of secondary level I and II, based on a large sample size.

Method. The study is supported by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research. 860,748 Austrians at secondary schools will be invited to participate. The complete dataset consists of (1) written informed consent and (2) completion of the online survey. The survey can be terminated at any time. The short standardized online survey is provided in German. It is available for pupils and adults, who can complete their respective version via an encrypted interface. The survey consists of 5 parts with questions about the person, sports, nutrition, health, and miscellaneous, including control questions to ensure reliable data. Approval by the 9 federal educational authorities and each principal of the 2,688 secondary schools is mandatory. Data will be collected Oct 2019-May2020. A descriptive analysis (sex, age, height, body weight, school level, diet, sports etc.), MANOVA and regression analyses will measure differences between subgroups, effects on choice of diet.

Results. Latest research suggests that for every 20-25 pupils, 2-8 are vegetarian/vegan (10-30 % prevalence), 6-9 are overweight and 16-18 do not achieve the minimum recommended amount of exercise.

Conclusions. Childhood lifestyles and habits track into adulthood, so improving childhood health is critical for achieving public health goals. This study will provide a major contribution to overcome the lack of information about vegetarian diet at Austrian schools.

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Key words. Vegan; vegetarian; physical activity; sports; exercise; school; secondary level I and II;

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The NURMI Study: <https://www.nurmi-study.com/en>

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