TRENDS IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND OVERWEIGHT IN THE DUTCH POPULATION

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PURPOSE

The goal of the Dutch Government is to realize by 2010 that 65% of the Dutch population meets the Physical Activity (PA) Guidelines (either 30 minutes per day PA of at least moderate intensity on at least five days per week and/or 20 minutes vigorous PA at least 3 times per week) and that the percentage of inactive people (not a single day per week 30 minutes PA) is reduced to 7% by 2010. Continuous monitoring of physical activity, body mass index (BMI) and health was initiated in 2000 to study trends in physical activity (PA), obesity and their determinants in the general Dutch population. This paper presents results of this monitor covering the period 2000-2005.

METHODS

The monitor involves a representative rolling sample of the Dutch population (n=approximately 8,000 yearly) interviewed by telephone (mean response rate: 54%). Respondents are asked about demographic characteristics, physical activity (PA), height/weight to calculate BMI and several determinants of PA.

RESULTS

The percentage of the Dutch population that meets the moderate intensity PA guideline increased from 44.2% in 2000 to 56.1% in 2005; 18.8% reported to meet the vigorous intensity PA guideline in 2000, this percentage increased to 22.4 in 2005. 63.1% of the Dutch population met one or both PA guidelines in 2005. The percentage of inactive people reduced from 9.2% in 2000 to 5.8% in 2005.

Overweight prevalence did not change significantly in this period. In 2000, 31.6% of the Dutch population had overweight and 7.6% obesity. In 2005, these percentages were 33.5% and 8.1%, respectively. The percentage respondents with overweight (BMI >25) was higher amongst those who did not comply with the PA Guidelines. In addition, also younger and elderly persons, lower educated persons, unemployed persons, workers with sedentary work, persons with chronic diseases and students did comply less with the guidelines.

CONCLUSION

The majority of the Dutch population did meet the current PA Guidelines during 2000-2005; these rates increased mainly during 2002-2005. The 2010-goal of the Dutch Government is thus almost realized in 2005. However, several target groups need further attention, since they showed much lower PA rates: i.e. persons with overweight, younger and elderly persons, lower educated persons, unemployed persons, workers with sedentary work, persons with chronic diseases and students.

Keywords: Monitoring, Overweight, Physical Activity and Health