The dietary effect of serving school meals based on the new Nordic diet – A randomised controlled trial in Danish children - DTU Orbit (09/12/2018)

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Background and objectives:
The OPUS study is a school-based intervention study testing selected health effects of New Nordic Diet (NND). Children are served lunch and snacks based on NND. The hypothesis is that Danish school children eat a healthier diet when receiving NND school meals as compared with packed lunch brought from home. To investigate the effects on intake of selected macronutrients in Danish school children when served school meals based on NND compared with packed lunch.

Methods:
In a cluster-randomized controlled unblinded cross-over study children received school meals based on NND for 3 months and their usual packed lunch for 3 months. The daily intake of food and beverages was recorded 3 times during 7 consecutive days using a validated self-administered web-based dietary assessment software tool for children. Statistical analysis was performed by hierarchical mixed models.

Results:
834 children from 9 schools were included and 96%, 89% and 80% filled out the first, second and third dietary assessment sufficiently (4-7 days), respectively. The preliminary results showed that the effect of serving NND resulted in a reduction in fat E% (P<0.0001), total fat (P=0.0007) and saturated fat (P<0.0001) intake for the NND compared to packed lunch; and an increase in protein E% (P<0.0001), and a borderline significant increase in dietary fiber intake (P=0.0471). There was no effect for energy intake, carbohydrate E% and added sugar E% (P>0.05). Effects are adjusted for BMI, season and household education.

Conclusions:
Danish school children's dietary intake of total and saturated fat decreased, fat E% decreased and protein E% increased when eating NND lunch and snacks compared to packed lunch brought from home. The OPUS project (Optimal well-being, development and health for Danish children through a healthy New Nordic Diet) is supported by the Nordea Foundation.

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