

How to preserve healthy aging through nutritional strategies: The new approach of the Food Social Network (Food NET) project

Colleoni, Matteo; Cremaschi, Marco; Daconto, Luca; Gallace, Alberto; Guzzetti, Lorenzo; Labra, Massimo; Maurino, Andrea; Zizzati, Sara; 

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Aging is a process that does not refer only to the accumulation of damage in a human being over time but rather to individual changes determined by genetic, lifestyle, social and environmental factors. Aging is one of the greatest known risk factors for most human diseases. An older person in good health has a good level of independence, weighs less on the national health system and plays a productive and active role in his/her community; thus, the concept of 'healthy aging', reflecting older adult-environment fit should be promoted. The interactions between lifestyle, including nutrition, and health play a fundamental role in the aging process; eating habits and eating behaviours are recognized as important modifiable factors potentially leading to a healthy 'phenotype'. **OBJECTIVE AND METHODS:** A multidisciplinary consortium with three Italian universities (the University of Milano-Bicocca, University of Pavia and University of Calabria) and Italian Small-Medium Enterprises proposed the Food Social Network (Food NET) project. Food NET overall outcome is to achieve target-specific guidelines and exact technologies for accessible functional foods, aimed at improving the quality of life and nutritional status of citizens (aged>65) of the Metropolitan City of Milan (Italy). **CONCLUSIONS:** This project is part of the 'Smart Living' and food-related strategies aimed at responding to the needs of this target population, developing new food products, appropriate to meet the specific requirements and ensuring and promoting sustainable diets for healthy aging by effective food policy approaches.



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