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City of Seinäjoki Overcoming Obesity Programme 2013-2020

In Finland municipalities have the responsibility to promote well-being and health of the population. Promotion of health is defined by the Health Care Act (Terveydenhuoltolaki 1326/2010) and Local Government Act (Kuntalaki 365/1995) and it is the part of Public Health Program. Health in All Policies, HiAP approach aims to pay systematic attention to health impacts as a part of decision-making in all municipal sectors.

In 2013 the City of Seinäjoki set the target to reduce obesity and overweight among children and young people. Obesity and obesity related diseases are national health problems in Finland, and the rate of overweight children has multiplied over the past decades. The target is to decrease the amount of children and young people who could become obese in adulthood preventing obesity related diseases at their later age. The goal is to promote healthy changes in lifestyle of children and families with the help of lifestyle guidance, nutrition and exercising.

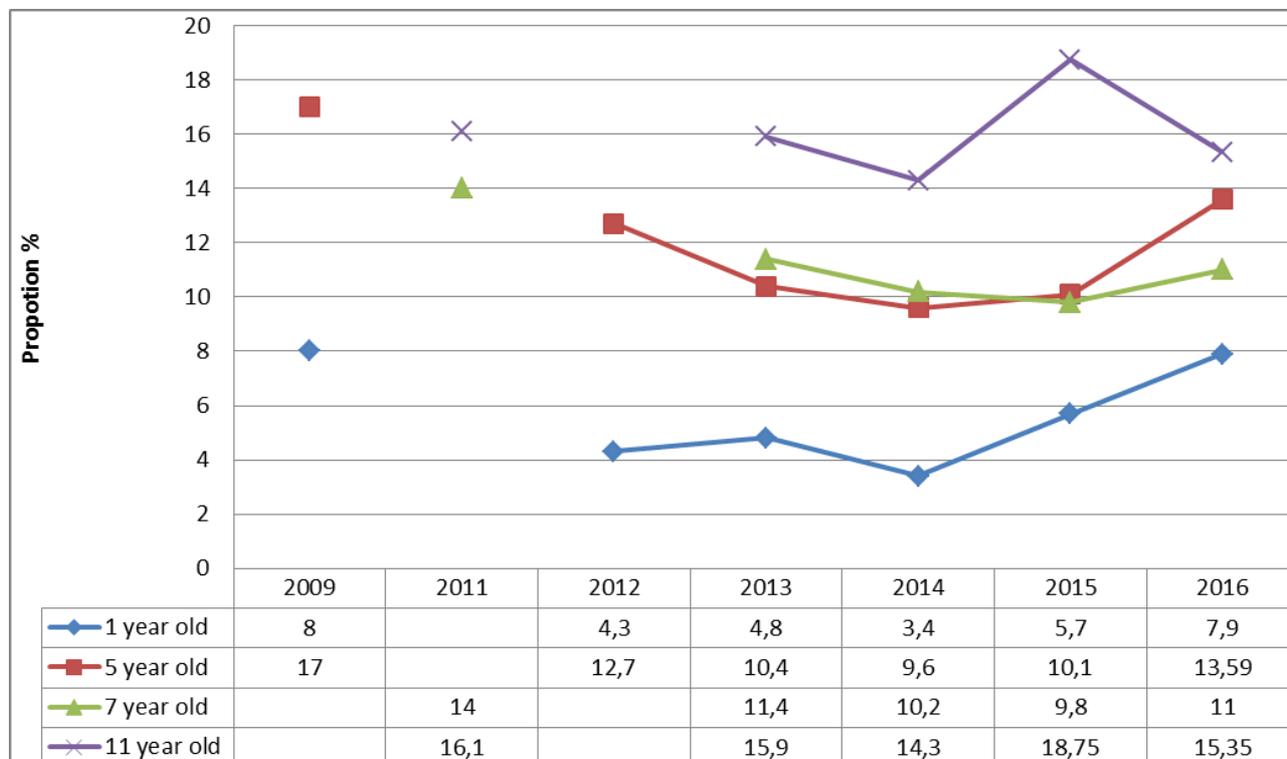
Children and families have access to services (in maternity and child health clinics, school and student health care units) promoting healthy lifestyle to the whole family. Most of comprehensive schools in Seinäjoki are committed to Schools on the Move - programme and implement Active School Day policy. Long intervals of sitting are avoided during the school day. Early childhood education units also encourage children to be active by playing, moving and learning. The content of fat, sugar, salt and fibre in lunches served at schools and day care units is monitored, and in 2015 lunch food was marked with Heart Symbol by the Finnish Heart Association. Physical Activity Services aim to increase physical activity of the population, encourage special groups to exercise and maintain sport facilities in co-operation with technical sector. The target is to create the favourable environment for children and families that would promote well-being and health, and all population groups would have a possibility to exercise and make healthy choices (for ex. the disabled).

The City of Seinäjoki is monitoring the implementation and results of the Programme yearly with the help of Well-being Report of the City of Seinäjoki. According to Health Care Act (1326/2010, § 12, www.finlex.fi) in Finland municipality has to monitor health and well-being of the residents, as well as factors contributing to them in different population groups. The Programme implemented in the City of Seinäjoki is based on the National Obesity Programme 2012-2018, coordinated by the National Institute for Health and Welfare (www.thl.fi). The work against obesity of the City of Seinäjoki is an excellent example of Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach, which binds every city departments together. Reduction of obesity and overweight is the common target for the whole city.

The Programme is monitoring 1 and 5 year old children, as well as the 1st and 2nd grade students weight development in child health clinics and school and student health care



units. We are monitoring weight development, mothers' breast-feeding activity, dental health and life-style. In 2009 almost one in five (17 %) 5 year old children in Seinäjoki was overweight or obese. In 2015 only one in ten (10,1 %) 5 year old children was overweight or obese. Today the weight of the children seems to grove.



Proportion (%) of obese and overweight children in different age groups in Seinäjoki in 2009-2016 (Effica)

In 2017 we started co-operation with other 6 municipalities in Finland. We are modelling the multi-sectoral [Overcoming Obesity Programme of the City of Seinäjoki](#) to the model that can be implemented in other municipalities. Our model includes on-line based training programme created for all municipal sectors from city planning to social and health care services and education. This programme is Healthy Kids, Health and wellbeing of children and their families, 5 ECTS (135 hours) created by City of Seinäjoki and Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences.

In 2018 City of Seinäjoki has become an international Healthy Kids of Seinäjoki development and training framework and platform. The first international conference is the first step to share knowledge and built the Healthy Kids of Seinäjoki network.

These good achievements brought international recognition to the city of Seinäjoki. The Programme demonstrates that prevention is possible and cost-effective. The results prove that a single municipality can set challenging targets and fulfil them doing consistent work to promote well-being and health of the population.