A cost-analysis of adopting a healthful diet in a family-based obesity treatment program

Many factors influence the food choices individuals make including nutrition knowledge, sensory preferences, cost, availability of foods and cultural practices. Among them, cost has been identified as one of the most influential factors on food choice. While common belief is that fruit and vegetable expenditure are one of the main factors causing the increase in dietary cost, evidence seems to show that a healthful diet may not be more expensive than a less healthful diet. Consequently, the objective of this study was “to assess dietary costs during a family-based pediatric obesity intervention.”

Overall, the results of the investigation showed that obese children and their parents participating in a family-based, pediatric weight control programme modified their dietary intake to more closely follow recommended nutrition guidelines. Indeed, “families reduced energy intake significantly and were consuming less than 30% of energy from fat, thereby meeting current dietary recommendations.” While the analyses of food costs within the first 6 months did not indicate changes in total daily food cost, the study highlighted costs that were significantly lower 1 year after treatment was initiated. Importantly, the greatest change that was observed among families’ diets was a reduction in servings of Red foods, which was subsequently maintained after the end of treatment. This therefore suggest that cost should not be a barrier in the adoption of a more healthful diet.