



The Process of Human Growth at the End of the 20th Century and Prospects for the New Millennium: An Italian Study of the Effects of Moderate Physical Exercise on Pre-pubertal Children

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ABSTRACT The research was carried out by way of a cross sectional study on a sample of 849 pre-pubertal subjects, 9 – 11 aged, living in Ravenna province (northern Italy). Aim of this study was to investigate the possible relationships of anthropometric traits and physical performances with physical activity and lifestyle. Examination records consisted of weight, height, bicristal and biacromial diameter, skinfold thicknesses, functional and physical performance parameters. Estimated means were compared with national and international standards, showing a tendency of North Italian children showed to overweight. The influence of a moderate physical exercise was evaluated on sub-samples of sporting and non-sporting children. The results show that moderate levels of physical activity have limited effects on anthropometric traits, before puberty. Nevertheless physical activities contribute to slightly improve motor performance and to keep the body weight under control. The observed Italian trend is discussed in relation to actual tendencies to a progressive uniformisation process in the lifestyle of populations of developed countries.

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