

# PROJECT HEPSC

## Healthy eating preschools children

Cross-Border Brochure

LEAD PARTNER:

Primary health care center Bar (PHC CB), Bar, Montenegro

Other partners:

Institute of Public Health Šibenik-Knin County (IPH SKC),  
Šibenik, Croatia

Institute of Public Health of Federation of Bosnia and  
Herzegovina (IPH FBH), Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ministry of Health of Herzeg-Bosnian Canton (MOH HBC),  
Tomislavgrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina

## ENCOURAGING HEALTHY EATING HABITS IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN



## Preschoolers' Growth

Preschool-age children are still developing their eating habits and need encouragement to eat healthy meals and snacks. These children are eager to learn. They will often imitate eating behaviors of adults.

Every child is an individual and develops at their own pace, each experiencing important stages and milestones like first step, first tooth, and first word.

Children need the right fuel for growing, learning and developing.

This means plenty of vegetables, fruits, nonfat or low-fat dairy, and lean protein foods to provide them with the nutrients they need.

This growth and development happens continually throughout a child's early years, but is not always experienced in a smooth, flowing pattern. Sometimes new skills are picked up quickly,

Once children start preschool, life takes on a new routine. A regular intake of food is needed throughout the day to keep children active and help their concentration while learning.

Children continue to learn new skills and ideas about food when eating outside the home.

The purpose of this brochure was to describe the criteria preschool children use to classify foods and their interpretation of their daily food experiences. Educational workshop on healthy food habits which are providing in three countries (Croatia - Bosnia and Herzegovina - Montenegro) of children's play in preschools were conducted with children enrolled in public preschool programs.

Data were collected over a 2-year period. During the project and the last year before starting primary education, 1330 preschool children for all partner countries participate fully in all education activities. The variables measured included the children's criteria for food classification and their knowledge test about healthy food which are consisting multiple-choice questions before and after a workshop.

The children relied primarily on physical characteristics such as color, shape, and texture to classify foods. These data may be used to develop a play-based nutrition education program.

Project HEPSC also demonstrated that parents and teachers believed that HEPSC helped promote prechildren's healthy eating. These included healthy food and nutrition education education and the community-based nature of preschools. For this purpose, a total of 726 parents of preschool children were educated.

Educational workshops were conducted in 20 preschool institutions located in the partner countries.

This brochure has been designed as a tool and report to encourage behavior change by promoting healthy eating habits among preschool children, their parents, teachers and cook staff from preschools.

Its objective is to have parents, teachers, cooks in preschool kitchens and other community member

- Educate them on eating behavior patterns.
- Recognize poor eating behavior patterns.
- Address longterm changes required in order to maintain behavior change.

Recognize that this publication is simply a guide for learning, and that most knowledge useful for overcoming the barriers and finding solutions to healthier eating are often already within the community, just waiting to be discovered and shared.

Before beginning a education workshop, the trainer should read the Materials and Preparation instructions on the left-hand side of the page. This will allow for the best delivery of the session. Materials features a list of all of the resources needed to successfully run the education session.



These guides on healthy eating and healthy eating habits outlines any requirements that the trainer must fulfill prior to beginning the session.



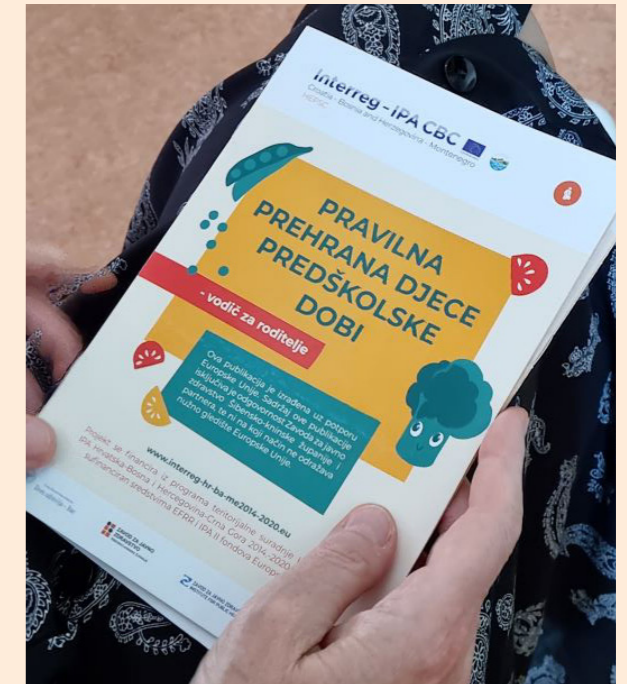
## The Design Of This Training Brochure

This brochure was created by all project partners based on the more than 90 educational workshops and 35 success preschool stories from 3 different countries - Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

Each workshop is made up of 3 parts - the Introduction, Training Session and Homework Task. The Introduction gives trainers the overview of the module, as well as learning objectives and outcomes for the session. The Training Session features Background information, intended to guide children, parents, teachers and cooks understanding, and accompanying Group Activities.



This questionnaire and project poster assist trainers to facilitate discussion and participatory learning, in order to meet the objectives of each training module.



The questionnaire and project poster also provides a Homework Task to ensure that participants (children, parents, teachers and cook staff in preschool kitchens) find the knowledge acquired is practical, useful, and brings about positive change in their community.

### MAIN GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS AT EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS FOR CHILDREN AND PRESCHOOL STAFF:

- The Introduction gives trainers an overview of the content of the training module, as well as the learning objectives and outcomes for the session
- The Group Activities assist trainers to facilitate discussion and participatory learning among children, in order to meet the objectives of each training module
- It is important to ensure that any paperwork required for future modules is collected at the end of each session (photos, list of participants evaluation forms etc)
- There is a Homework Task for each module, to ensure that participants (children, parents, teachers and cook staff) find the knowledge acquired practical, useful, and helps to bring about positive change in their community

WORKSHOP	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
<b>EDUCATIONAL MODULE 1:</b> Eating Habits of Children In Our Communities	Understand the eating habits of preschool children aged 3-7. Identify why and how decisions on food purchases and preparation are made Reflect on their own and their children's eating habits.	Discussion between groups
<b>EDUCATIONAL MODULE 2:</b> Healthy Eating, Growth & Development	Reflect on their preschool children's eating habits.	Apply learnings from different partnership communities to one's own community. Recall the three major food groups.
<b>EDUCATIONAL MODULE 3:</b> Why are good practices important for children?	Clearly identify and list not healthy and healthy food and consequent deficiencies. Demonstrate and share an ability to move from identifying problems associated with bad eating habits to identifying how to reach solutions.	Clearly define the different food choices.
<b>EDUCATIONAL MODULE 4:</b> How to help children eat a nutritious, healthy food.	Learning from an early age.	Clearly define the different food choices.
<b>EDUCATIONAL MODULE 5:</b> Nutrition for Life - Healthy Living Success Stories	Create a success understanding and awareness of healthy food, healthy living and healthy options. Explore problems and solutions to them providing healthy meals.	Identify healthy options for food, how to overcome problems and where to go for nutrition assistant.
<b>EDUCATIONAL MODULE 6:</b> Build a Healthy Meal Plan	Plan your meals so you eat from all five food groups - fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy. Begin basic meal planning in order to prepare balanced and nutritious meals.	Understand the food groups, and the importance of balance. Draw up individual meal plans.

## Success Stories

Four HEPSC project stories and results that feature success stories from preschools in three different countries.

These are examples of how other institutions, individuals and community groups can enhanced their eating habits and ultimately, improved the health and nutrition of their children.



## ENCOURAGING HEALTHY EATING HABITS IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

### Education

## Eating Habits of Children In Our Communities Community Preschools

### Materials

Educational promotional materials and items (one for each participant).

Set of educational materials and questionnaires for each participant (children, parents, teachers and cook staff) to use for their own notes and homework tasks.

### Introduction

Those modules covers eating and healthy practices in preschools and in our communities for preschool children aged 3-7.

During this workshops, the trainer should assist children to:

- Understand the eating habits
- Identify why and how decisions on food purchases and preparation are made.
- Reflect on their own eating habits.

**At the end of the workshop, children should be able to:**

- what is good for their health

### Preparation

Read through each Module before beginning the training session with the group.

Be sure that all of the materials are prepared for each group activity, including writing the topics for discussion.

At the beginning of the session, take time to review the homework task from the introductory lecture, and discuss the results.

BACKGROUND

## Plan an introduction to catch the children's interest

### Some Eating Practices In Our Communities

By ages 3-7 years, children should be eating and enjoying meals, and participating in them meal times with the rest of the family. At this time, children need special/healthy foods, and it is important to laying the foundations of healthy eating. Children now enjoy eating with friends and family, they know the broader role of food and begin to be influenced by TV advertising. They recognize that food can be used as rewards.

This is also a time when children begin to eat outside of home - at preschool, at other people's houses and at restaurants. This is why it is so important for parents, teachers and healthy educators to encourage, support and influence healthy eating habits.



## Eating practices of children in our community preschools

Except parents responsible for what we offer for our children to eat - often 5-6 meals a day for 3-7 year olds is also on community to make meals healthy and meal times pleasant in preschools.

At times, time and financial constraints mean we take short cuts or just have to make do.

Our Healthy Eating Preschool Children HEPSC project showing us that in communities in many educational institutions - where land is limited - there is a tendency to buy a lot more processed foods much more than buying a seasonal market fruit and vegetables are available.

### Reasons for educational workshops in preschools among children, parents, teacher and cook staff included:

- Affordability - cheaper to buy processed, packaged and tinned foods.
- Easier to prepare processed, packaged and tinned foods.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables were not always available.
- Not having enough preparation time.
- Lack of awareness on what constitutes a balanced meal.
- Children do not like vegetables.
- Lack of awareness on quantity and quality of food.
- No "green educational courses" as part of educational curricula
- Children have a preference for sweets, takeaway, junk food cakes, soft drinks, etc.

As a result of such eating practices and problems in the project surveyed preschools between HEPSC project partners, it was observed that some of the children were over-weight.



### Group activity 1:

In this group activity, initiate discussion by asking children the following questions; Why should we worry about what we eat? Why should we consider changing our eating habits? Ask the children to fill in a questionnaire about healthy eating or if they can't read help them to answer the questions about what they think is the right answer, and then discuss these responses with the group, exploring the reasoning for these answers

### Group activity 2:

In this activity, divide children into groups and ask each group to give an overview of their own eating habits, and record these observations. Ask each group to present their thinking, and discuss any questions that arise. (Keep these answers as they are needed for monitoring and evaluation).

### Homework Task

Ask children to fill out the Training Questionnaire. Ask them to note down some of the barriers that they encounter when providing healthy and balanced meals for their families.

At the beginning of the next session, set aside time to help participants to total their score, according to the handout. Collect the filled-out Questionnaire and discuss the participant's results, noting the barriers and obstacles.

Children grow and develop at different rates. Nutritional needs of children differ at different stages and ages of their development.

For preschoolers, those between 3-7 years of age, this is the time for growth and development. Good growth is dependent on a number of factors.

These include:

- Family- familie's size;
- Age - children grow fastest as babies and teenagers;
- General health - medical conditions, illness;
- Gender - boys and girls have different growth patterns;
- Activity levels - how active child is;

**But most importantly:  
The eating habits of the child - what and how much your child eats.**

And thus the need for healthy meals and snacks in preschools, with the right balance or amount from each food groups. Project HEPSC provide a good guideline poster on each food groups and appropriate amounts to eat from each group, and what to drink.

Meal choices affects to child's health, including their physical and mental growth.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT to increased public education and efforts by parents and communities to eat healthier in recent years, some improvements have been noted in children's growth.

According to the National Institutes for Public Health from HEPSC project partner, population has continued to increase in height and weight. This may be happening due to increased intake of foods containing protein and energy.

Additionally, healthy eating has also resulted in less people becoming ill with infectious diseases.

The bad news, and why we should seriously consider changing eating behavior, is that a high prevalence rate of diabetes among children has persisted.

Poor development can also lead to problems later in life, such as non-communicable diseases like high blood pressure, problems with blood vessels, growth and physical development.

## GROUP ACTIVITY

### Eat Right, Be Healthy, Active And Smart!

During the group activity, quiz the children on the following yes/no questions. Ask the children to raise their hands if they agree with the statements and reward the most active ones with a small educational gift. What children think to be “normal” eating and activity for a preschooler 3-7 years old may surprise you. Use the notes below to discuss their answers.



### Should preschoolers be active every day?

Preschool-aged children love to move and be active. Daily physical activity helps strengthen their heart, lungs, bones and muscles. It also gives them confidence and helps them learn social skills, as well as teaching them movement skills they will need for lifelong physical activity and it is also a sure way to build their appetites.

## From Problems To Solutions

An excellent guide on unhealthy eating practices and healthier alternatives is available through the Ministries of Health. The National Institutes of Public Health provides information on food categories that should be and should not be served and sold in educational institutions. It also offers a useful checklist on restricted foods and ‘can have’ foods, as well as daily menu options, which parents of preschoolers and preschool children can easily adapt for their 3-7 year olds.



## Water

How much water your child needs to drink depends on their level of activity. Most children drink 6-8 glasses of water a day.

Water is the best options when it comes to choosing healthy drinks. Water accompanying the school lunch is the best choice, Sugar in fruit juice is no better than the sugar found in traditional sweets because it is so concentrated and all of the nutrients from the fruit it was extracted from are removed.

It's also important to remember that taste is acquired

## Nutrition for Life - Healthy Living Success Stories

We all want the best for our children and all parents desire to have healthy children and to take care of their children's nutrition in the best and healthiest way.

### Preschool-age kids need foods from all five healthy food groups:

- vegetables,
- fruit,
- grain foods,
- dairy
- and protein.

### Some points to remember:

- Choose foods low in fat and salt
- Eat only moderate amounts of sugar and foods containing added sugar, particularly sweets and soft drinks.
- Avoid deep frying.
- Eat a well-balanced meal with correct portions of health, energy and body building foods.

## What change in HEPSC project was seen?

All this notes are from 4 HEPSC project partners (Primary health care center Bar (PHC CB), Bar, Montenegro, Institute of Public Health Šibenik-Knin County (IPH SKC), Šibenik, Croatia, Institute of Public Health of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (IPH FBH), Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ministry of Health of Herzeg-Bosnian Canton (MOH HBC), Tomislavgrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina) which has supported in their aim in improving healthy food status of children and modifying behavior from unhealthy eating to healthy eating. In this project parents were informed of their children's eating habits and held discussions to understand barriers to feeding children healthy, well balanced meals.

This HEPSC Project allowed all participants to draw out problems, solutions and collaboratively worked together with community and project partners to bring about positive change to childhood nutrition in their communities.

These success stories are offered as an example of how individuals have worked together as a project partners to break down the barriers to healthy eating.



THANK all project partners for bringing their expertise and experience in HEPSC project engaging in such fruitful, constructive and open exchanges throughout the two years of the project.





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