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## How to improve the nutritional quality of meals eaten in a worksite canteen: A pilot study

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Recently, efforts have attempted to improve dietary habits in the workplace, by increasing the availability of healthy foods and promoting their selection. The aim of this study was to evaluate the long-term impact on the composition of the habitual diet of a nutritional intervention, based on the promotion of food choices characteristic of the Mediterranean Diet (MD) in a worksite-canteen. A pilot intervention was performed on 750 employees of the Barilla Company (Italy), who consumed their lunch at the worksite-canteens daily. The canteen-staff involved in food preparation, underwent a nutritional education course with an experienced nutritionist. Afterwards, they were involved in the reformulation of the menus by including at least 2-3 healthy options every-day, actively promoted with panels, totems, table mats, handout leaflets and a specific logo. Habitual dietary habits were evaluated by a self-administered 24-hour recall at baseline, at the end of intervention and after 6-months. The analysis of the food-items selected day-by-day by the employees showed that the intake of wholegrain-cereals, legumes and white-meat increased at the end of intervention (+58%, +135%, +35%, respectively), while the intake of refined-cereals, red-meat and eggs, cheese, cold-cuts decreased (-10%, -16%, -28%, respectively). These findings were confirmed after 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> month from the intervention ( $p<0.05$ ). The analysis of 24-h-recalls showed several beneficial dietary changes, including an increase in dietary fiber (+5%) and polyunsaturated fatty acids intake (+6%), and a decrease in saturated fatty acids (-4%) and added sugar consumption (-7%). These changes persisted up to 6-months after the intervention ( $p<0.05$ ). The increased availability of healthy food options and their promotion at the worksite is able to improve the eating habits of the employees in the long term.

### Biography

Marilena Vitale completed her Bachelor's degree in Dietetics and a Master's degree in Human Nutrition. Recently, she completed her PhD in Food and Nutrition Science at the "Federico II" University of Naples, Italy. Her research is focused on the evaluation of eating habits in the general population and in type 2 diabetic patients. In addition, she is involved in several clinical trials evaluating the effects of different diets on important clinical outcomes in subjects at high cardio-metabolic risk.

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