

Abstract citation ID: ckaf161.1513**Health promotion as the Main Criterion for Food Choice: A Four-Wave Study of Residents of Lithuania****Rokas Arlauskas****R Arlauskas¹, D Austys¹, R Stukas¹**¹Public Health, Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania

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Background: Health promotion should be the main criterion for food selection. However, the results of longitudinal studies indicate that this is not the case. A Health education and promotion, also, the improvement of health and nutrition literacy continue to be areas of crucial importance to be dealt with by healthcare professionals.

Summary of Work: Four cross-sectional surveys were carried out by involving working-age adult residents of Lithuania: in 2021 (during the COVID-19 pandemic), in 2022, 2023, 2024 (after the pandemic). A total of 6400 respondents were surveyed, 1600 each year. The distribution of the respondents by food choice criteria was compared based on the samples according to gender, age, marital status, education level, place of residence, employment, income.

Summary of Results: The COVID-19 pandemic affected the food choices of Lithuanian residents ($p < 0.05$). In 2021, the selection of foods according to the benefits of products for health was most prevalent accounting for 31% of the samples. In 2022, it returned back to the prepandemic level accounting for 19% of the samples. However, in 2023 and 2024, health promotion as the main criterion for food choice was indicated by 24% and 25% of respondents, respectively. Unfortunately, this does not reach the level of 2021, with respondents identifying the taste and the price of food products as the main criteria when choosing food. The influence of other family members on food choice is becoming more apparent with 16% of respondents reporting this in 2024. In all social and demographic groups, the same changes in food selection criteria were observed ($p < 0.05$).

Discussion and Conclusions: Although the COVID-19 pandemic had a positive impact on the food choices of working-age adults, in the post-pandemic period health promotion became a secondary criterion for food selection. Less than a year after the pandemic, food choices based on health benefits decreased rapidly.

Key messages:

- Increasing the nutritional literacy of the population must be a continuous process of health promotion.
- Healthy eating education should be carried out by constantly emphasizing the importance of nutrition for improving health.