

# Overcoming Obesity Programme 2013–2020



SEINÄJOKI

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## 1 Overcoming Obesity Programme targets

City of Seinäjoki launched Overcoming Obesity Programme in 2013. The Programme is based on the National Obesity Programme 2012–2018 'Overcoming obesity – well-being from healthy nutrition and physical activity' coordinated by the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL). Among the targets of well-being strategy of the City of Seinäjoki is decreasing the amount of children and young people affected by obesity or overweight, reducing smoking, blocking the drug use proliferation and creating the dense social structure with attention to needs of the residents and inclusiveness (Well-being Report of the City of Seinäjoki 2013-2016). The target of well-being strategy elaborated by the City of Seinäjoki is to gap the health bridge between the residents and implement long term projects aimed to promote health of the population.

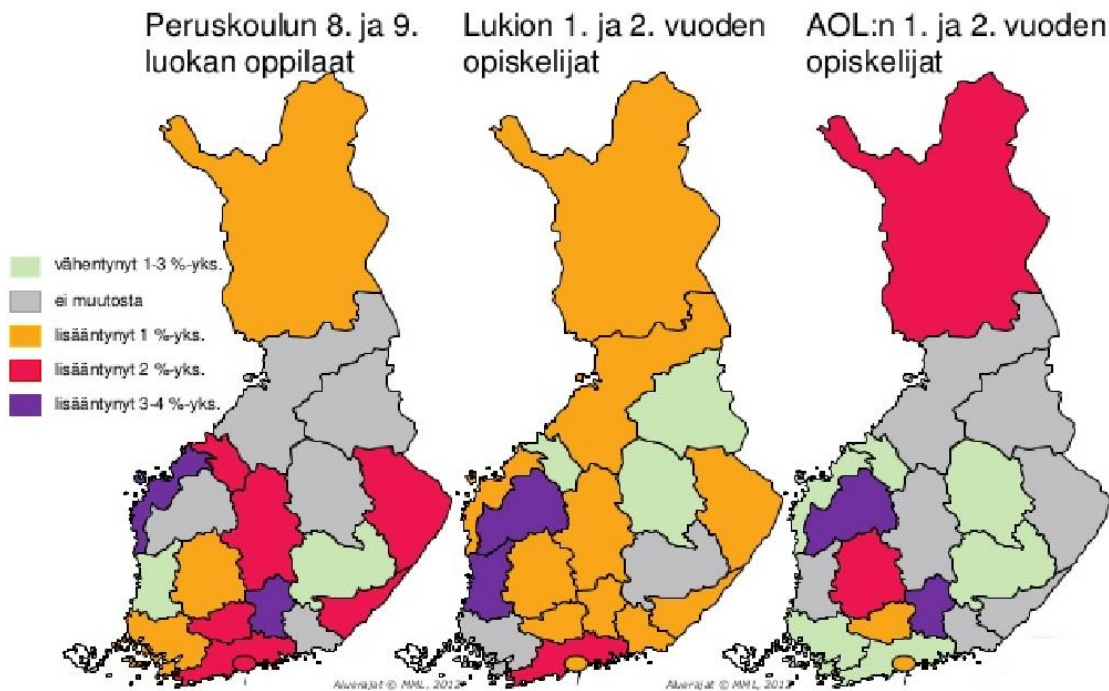
Overcoming Obesity Programme targets:

The target of Overcoming Obesity Programme implemented by the City of Seinäjoki is to decrease the amount of children and young people who could become obese in adulthood, preventing obesity related diseases at their later age.

## 2 Programme Background

- Overweight and obesity are national problems in Finland. The amount of overweight people had increased during the past decades which seriously affects the health of the nation and shows economic imprint. Obesity in Finland is more common than in other Nordic countries.
- Obesity increases morbidity e.g. type 2 diabetes, heart and vascular diseases, musculoskeletal disorders as well as numerous types of cancer.
- Health expenses of an overweight person are 25 % higher than those of a person with normal weight.
- Since 1990s the alarming increase in overweight and obesity among the residents has been detected in Southern Ostrobothnia.
- In 1997-2013 in comprehensive schools of Southern Ostrobothnia the proportion of 8th and 9th grade overweight girls has increased from 8 to 14 per cent and the proportion of overweight boys from 16 to 23 per cent (The School Health Questionnaire).

- In 2010-2013 the amount of overweight students in the 1st and 2nd grade of the high school and in the 1st and 2nd grade of the vocational school increased by 3-4 % in Southern Ostrobothnia (picture 1).



Picture 1. Changes in overweight in 2010/11-2013 in Finland (The School Health Questionnaire)

### 3 Implementation

The programme based on co-operation of the whole city was launched in 2013, and its implementation still continues as one of the priority projects aimed to promote health and well-being in the city of Seinäjoki. The Programme is maintained and coordinated by Health and Welfare Promotion Unit of the City of Seinäjoki ([www.seinajoki.fi/terveydenedistaminen](http://www.seinajoki.fi/terveydenedistaminen)).

The City of Seinäjoki is implementing Overcoming Obesity Programme without extra financing or resources as a part of each sector's basic work and yearly budget. The implementation and results of the Programme as well as well-being of the residents are yearly monitored with the help of Well-being report that is used in further planning and decision-making.

## 4 City of Seinäjoki Obesity Programme main subjects

1. The city of Seinäjoki aims to actively promote well-being, gap the differences in well-being and monitor effectiveness of taken measures with the help of well-being report. Health and well-being promotion and obesity prevention are taken into account in all strategic planning and decision-making at municipal and regional levels.
2. Decision-makers have access to up-to-date information on research, statistics and good practices.
3. The environment and functional practices promote and encourage physical activity.
4. Healthy dietary choices are available for everyone.
5. The whole population has access to motivating, inclusive and empowering lifestyle guidance and health monitoring as well as support for healthy choices. The purpose is to make children and their families understand that overweight is connected with all the components of well-being and health, and overweight in childhood leads to morbidity in adulthood. Families get timely information and services that support healthy life choices and taking responsibility for family's well-being.
6. Guidelines on diet, physical activity and clinical practice as well as effective working methods are well known and applied.
7. Obesity prevention and health promotion are included in vocational and continuing education in fields of health care, teaching, nutrition and physical activity.
8. Our partners create networks and make commitment to prevent obesity.
9. Families and communities participate in Overcoming Obesity programme.

## 5 We have a common target to reduce overweight and obesity in children and adolescents

### Municipal administration and authorities

The task of authorities is to make all municipal sectors committed to Overcoming Obesity programme and to monitor the programme implementation with the help of well-being report.

## Families with children

Families and communities participate in building of better life. Parents and children understand that overweight is related to all the components of well-being and health, and overweight in childhood leads to morbidity in adulthood. Families get timely information and services that support learning healthy life choices and taking responsibility for family's well-being.

## Social and health services

The Finnish system of maternity and child health clinics reaches 99,6 % of children. School and student health care works as local service connected to schools. Children and families are individually consulted, and children's growth and development are regularly monitored in maternity and child health clinics, school and student health care units and oral health care clinics. Professionals update guidelines on nutrition and physical activity elaborating effective methods of obesity treatment and prevention. Diversified family service centres provide support to children and families (Sokkeli and Pilari).

## Early childhood education

Pedagogic planning in early childhood education is based on perspective of physical activity (games, outdoor activities, forest outings). Healthy food (Heart Symbol) in day care units encourages families to commit to healthy nutrition also at home. Bringing sweets and soft drinks to day care units is forbidden. Parenthood is supported, for example, by encouraging families to joint activities - 'Move more and spend less time with gadgets!'

## Schools and educational institutions

Educational practices support healthy life choices and physical activity is a part of regular school day. Comprehensive schools of Seinäjoki have participated in national programme Schools on the Move since 2012 (for ex. active lessons, standing desks, physical activity breaks). Next autumn 24/27 schools will be implementing Schools on the Move programme. In 2015 shared sport coordinator for comprehensive education and sport services was introduced to school in order to increase physical activity during the school day. Heart-healthy school nutrition is also a pedagogic event. Primary and upper comprehensive schools got school nutrition committees that include also student representatives. Local sports facilities are constructed in school yards.

## Youth Services

The task of youth services is to arrange leisure and past time activity possibilities for young people under 29: Support of life management of the youth and dynamic youth culture. Search work among the youth allows to reach 'dropouts', young people that could be encouraged to use leisure and past time activity services.

## Nutrition Services

Nutrition services at schools and early childhood education units are providing meals that meet healthy nutrition requirements serving over 11 000 heart healthy lunches a day (Heart Symbol 2015). Collaborative work groups including representatives of schools, early childhood education units and nutrition services promote dietary solutions that meet healthy nutrition requirements. The attention has been paid to reducing sugar content of the snacks served. Strict criteria of salt, sugar, fat and fibre content of food is under consideration.

#### Physical Activity Services

The target is to increase physical activity of the municipality population and to improve conditions and circumstances for health supporting physical activity. Strategy on physical activity and sport facility planning of the town is done in close co-operation with the town residents and actors. There are also physical activity services for the disabled. Sport clubs are arranged for those who are not participating in sport societies. Swimming courses, gym exercising guides, sport for special groups and co-operation with sport societies so-called 'introductory sport activity' encourage a child to find a suitable sport activity.

#### Municipal infrastructure

The municipal infrastructure service is planning and maintaining places for physical exercise. Yards of schools and day care units must be designed to encourage physical activity, and sport facilities for the disabled must be well maintained.

#### Land use planning

Zoning and land use planning is corresponding the needs of the residents creating the environment that promotes physical activity.

#### The Third Sector and Parishes

Non-profit organisations participate in creating well-being, for example, Heart Association, Diabetes Association, Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, the Martha Organization, Rural Women's Advisory Organisation, Exercise and Sport Association of Ostrobothnia (PLU), sport and exercise societies (over 70), as well as parish work groups and family services.

#### Culture services, library and community college

The target is to promote creativity and active life by organising different events and pastimes. The municipality provides numerous various pastime options for different age groups, as well as educating, inclusive and communal activities to stimulate 'coach potatoes'.

#### Health and Welfare Promotion Unit

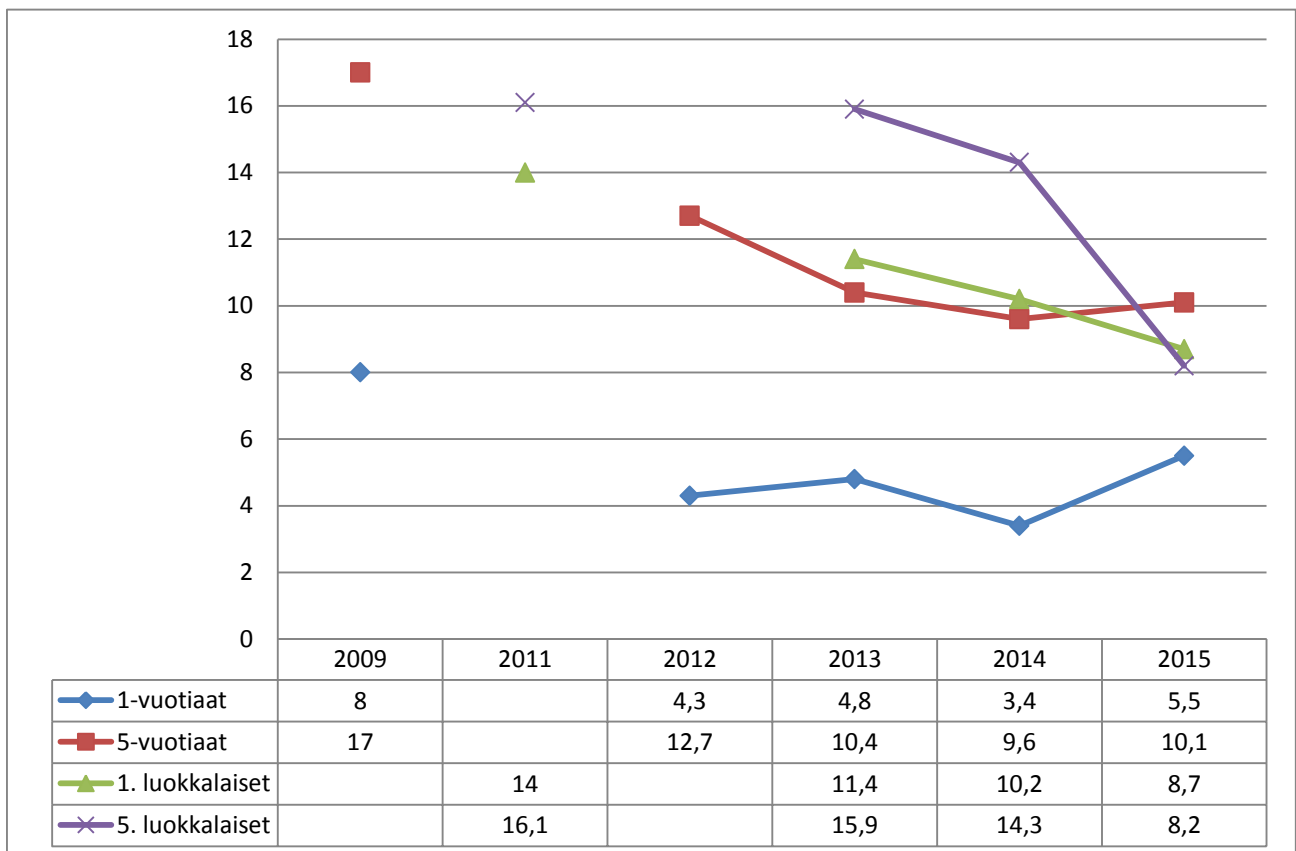
The task of Health and Welfare Promotion Unit of the City of Seinäjoki is to do planning and co-ordinate the programme. The other task is to maintain cooperation networks and competences, as

well as to provide informational support. In 2016 the steering group for the Programme was established. The target is to create new research information on the Programme and its effectiveness. [www.seinajoki.fi/terveydenedistaminen](http://www.seinajoki.fi/terveydenedistaminen)

## 6 Results

The purposeful work on children obesity prevention in Seinäjoki has achieved significant results. The programme is monitoring 1 and 5 year old children, as well as the 1st and 5th grade students weight development in child health clinics and school and student health care units with the help of Effic information system.

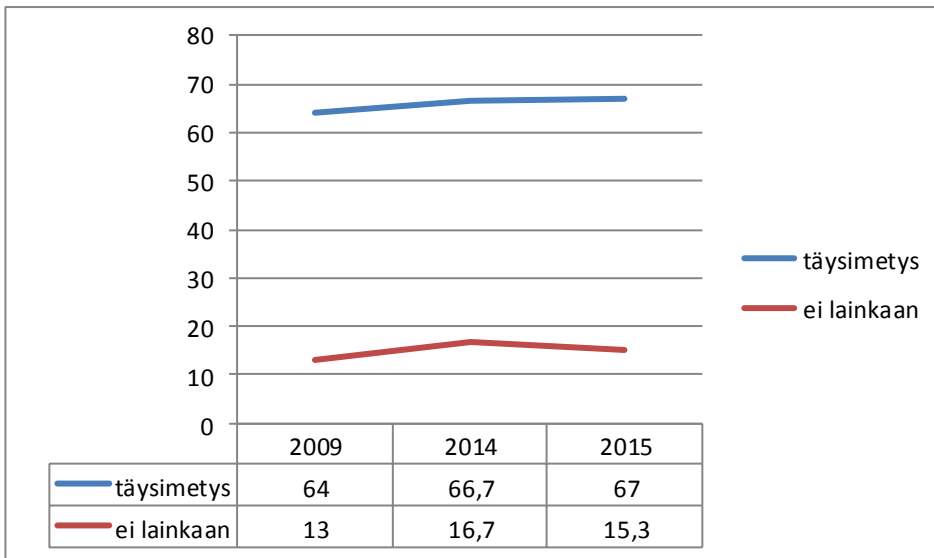
In 2009 almost one in five (17 %) 5 year old children in Seinäjoki was overweight or obese. In 2015 only one in ten (10,1 %) 5 year old children was overweight or obese (Effic). The favourable weight development of primary school students has continued. In 2011 14 % of 1st grade students and 16,1 % of 5th grade students were overweight or obese. Four years later 8,7 % of 1st grade students and 8,2 % of 5th grade students were overweight or obese (picture 2).



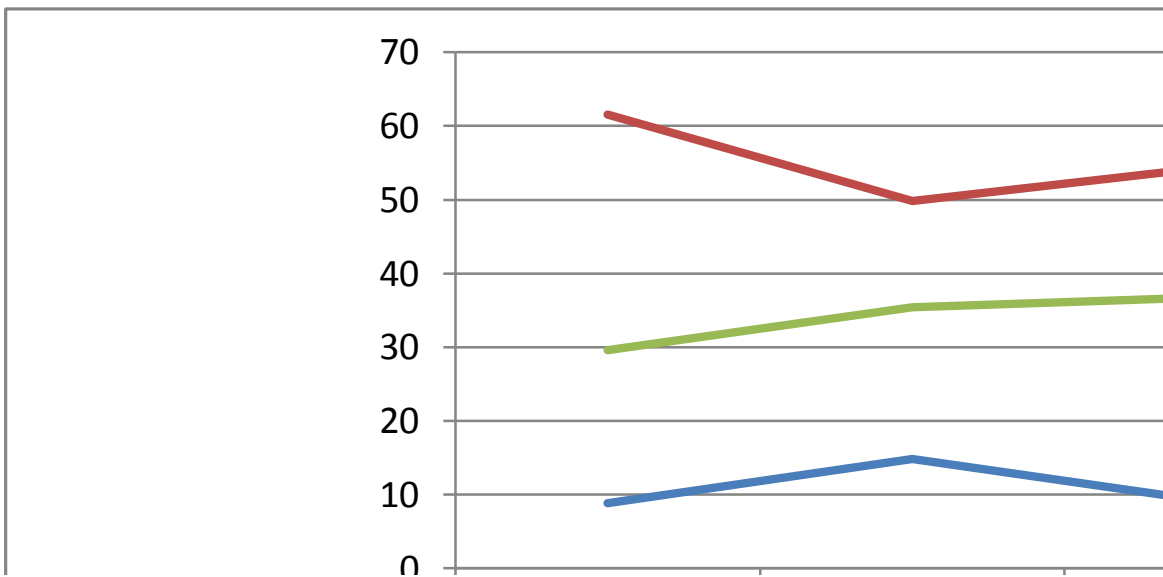
Picture 2. Proportion (%) of obese and overweight children in different age groups in Seinäjoki in 2009-2015 (Effic)



The maternity and child health clinics are monitoring mothers' breast-feeding activity. According to the research breast-feeding protects the child from overweight and obesity and reduces risks of vascular diseases in adulthood. During the monitoring period breast-feeding activity in Seinäjoki has slightly increased in 2 and 6 month old babies. The proportion of children not breast-fed at all decreased in 2015 in both age groups (pictures 3 and 4).

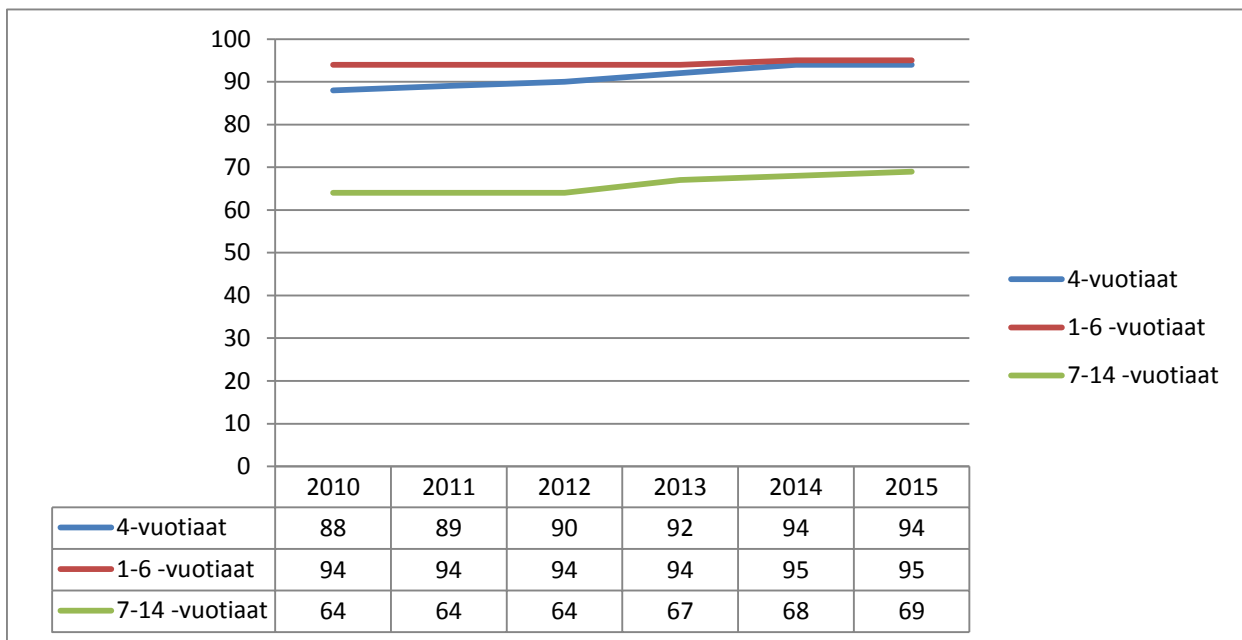


Picture 3. Breast-feeding activity at the age of 2 months % of mothers in Seinäjoki in 2009-2015



Picture 4. Breast-feeding activity at the age of 6 months % of mothers in Seinäjoki in 2009-2015

Positive life style changes in families with infants are reflected also in dental health. Proportion of people with healthy teeth is monitored with the help of d/D index (=decayed tooth demanding filling). More and more children under 14 are proved to have healthy teeth. The increase in people with healthy teeth among those checked in 2010-2015 is presented in picture 5. Dental decay is also influenced by oral hygiene. Oral health care clinics conducted survey on 4753 patients to study their teeth brushing routines in 2015. 64 % of oral health care clinics customers claimed to brush teeth at least twice a day. 2 % informed that they brush their teeth less frequently than once a day.



Picture 5. Proportion of people with healthy teeth (%) among those checked in 2010-2015 in Seinäjoki

Overweight and obesity are still problems in Southern Ostrobothnia, and the challenge is to spread the positive effects of obesity prevention work also to older age groups. Overcoming Obesity Programme of the city of Seinäjoki has received international attention. The model of Seinäjoki is used to launch Overcoming School Obesity Programme in South Korean Seoul in 2016 (Seoul Metropolitan Government SMG). Good results and international attention towards our programme encourage the city of Seinäjoki, its officials, children and parents to continue this co-operation.

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