

PEDIATRICS

Tailoring weight-control programs to teenagers

A weight-control lifestyle intervention program specifically tailored to adolescent girls has shown promising results, with sustained decreases in BMI and positive changes in behavior observed beyond the initial 5-month intervention period.

“There was a gap in available evidence-based weight management programs for teens,” explains first author Lynn DeBar, “with good programs available for adults ... and school-age children (6–11 years), but few successful interventions showing positive effects for adolescents.” As such, DeBar and colleagues instituted a tailored weight-control program for young women to establish a healthy diet, regular physical activity and to guard against disordered eating patterns and depressive symptoms.

DeBar *et al.* enrolled 208 overweight adolescent girls in their study (aged 12–17 years, with BMI in the $\geq 90^{\text{th}}$ percentile for their age group). The teenagers were then randomly assigned to either the intervention group—to

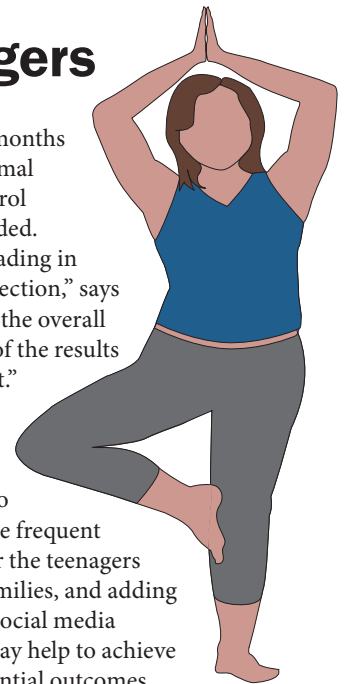
receive dietary advice, exercise programs (including yoga and dance-related exergaming) and support with behavioral changes—or the usual care control group. Crucially, the investigators adopted a group meeting format with separate sessions for the parents (to help understand and support the teenagers’ lifestyle changes) and the girls (to provide support among their peers and self-direction) during the 5 months of active intervention.

Over time (up to 12 months), decreases in the BMI *z* score were significantly greater in the intervention group than the control group ($P=0.01$), although the actual change in BMI was classed as low to moderate. Furthermore, girls in the intervention group had positive changes in psychosocial outcomes (including greater body satisfaction) and health behaviors (such as reduced fast-food intake) than their control counterparts. Finally, the teenage girls seemed to be able to sustain these positive changes for

a further 6 months after the formal weight-control program ended.

“We’re heading in the right direction,” says DeBar, “but the overall magnitude of the results were modest.” She adds that a more intensive program—to include more frequent meetings for the teenagers and their families, and adding online and social media support—may help to achieve more substantial outcomes.

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Original article DeBar, L. *et al.* A primary care-based, multicomponent lifestyle intervention for overweight adolescent females. *Pediatrics* 129, e611–e620 (2012)