

Obesity prevention program for girls not associated with significant difference in body mass index

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An Australian school-based obesity prevention program for adolescent girls was not associated with statistically significant differences in body mass index (BMI) and other body composition measures, however the small changes may be related to clinically important health outcomes, according to a report published Online First by *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*. The study is part of the Nutrition and the Health of Children and Adolescents theme issue.

Obesity prevention is a global health priority because obese youth are at an elevated risk for obesity in adulthood, the authors write in their study background.

David R. Lubans, Ph.D., of the University of Newcastle, Australia, and colleagues examined the effects of the 12-month Nutrition and Enjoyable Activity for Teen Girls (NEAT Girls) program, a group randomized controlled trial designed to prevent unhealthy weight gain in [adolescent girls](#) living in low-income communities.

The study included 357 adolescent girls between the ages of 12 to 14 years, and 148 girls received the intervention. The intervention program included, among other things, enhanced school sport sessions, nutrition workshops, lunchtime physical activity sessions and text messaging for social support.

"The intervention effects on [body composition](#) were small and not statistically significant but have potential clinical importance," the authors comment. "Girls in the intervention group spent 30 minutes per day less in screen-based activities than their control group peers. High levels of screen time are associated with a range of adverse health consequences, and our findings have important implications that may help address the

increasing burden of pediatric and adolescent obesity observed in areas of social and economic disadvantage."

After 12 months, changes in BMI (adjusted mean (average) difference, -0.19); BMI z score (the relative weight of a child adjusted for child age and sex, mean, -0.08); and body fat percentage (mean, -1.09) were "in favor of the intervention, but they were not statistically different from those in the control group," according to the study results.

"Our findings demonstrate the potential for multicomponent school-based interventions for the prevention of unhealthy weight gain in adolescent girls attending schools in low-income communities," the authors conclude.

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