Childhood obesity prevention programs: comparative effectiveness review and meta-analysis


Authors' objectives
Childhood obesity is a serious health problem in the United States and worldwide. More than 30 percent of American children and adolescents are overweight or obese. We assessed the effectiveness of childhood obesity prevention programs by reviewing all interventional studies that aimed to improve diet, physical activity, or both and that were conducted in schools, homes, primary care clinics, childcare settings, the community, or combinations of these settings in high-income countries. We also reviewed consumer health informatics interventions. We compared the effects of the interventions on weight-related outcomes (e.g., body mass index [BMI], waist circumference, percent body fat, skinfold thickness, prevalence of obesity and overweight); intermediate outcomes (e.g., diet, physical activity); and obesity-related clinical outcomes (e.g., blood pressure, blood lipids).

Authors' conclusions
The evidence is moderate about the effectiveness of school-based interventions for childhood obesity prevention. Physical activity interventions in a school-based setting with a family component or diet and physical activity interventions in a school-based setting with home and community components have the most evidence for effectiveness. More research is needed to test interventions in other settings, such as those testing policy, environmental, and consumer health informatics strategies.

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