

FOR HEALTH

A Family-Oriented Healthy Eating, Activity and Lifestyle Training with Hands-on experience: A new, community-based Obesity Intervention Study for preschool children 2 years 9 months - 6 years of age and their families.

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Collaborators: YMCA London Ontario, various London community physicians.

Background

The prevalence of childhood obesity in Canada has increased five-fold over the previous 15 years, with 26% of all Canadian children aged 2-17 years being overweight or obese and 9% being obese. Significant health risks are linked to obesity in children and adults, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, liver and gall bladder disease, respiratory problems including asthma, orthopaedic issues, as well as some cancers. Current scientific evidence sees the family as critically important for the outcomes of overweight and obese preschool children, and caregivers are seen as “agents of change” in the treatment of their overweight children. Thus, any successful weight management intervention for young children must target and engage the whole family, not just the child. Also, recent reviews on the effectiveness of weight management interventions in children concluded that multidisciplinary behavioural interventions are safe in children aged 4 to 18 years and can be effective in reducing overweight. However, very little data on the effectiveness of weight management interventions for children under 7 is available.

Therefore, “FOR HEALTH”, a novel family-centred, community-based, multidisciplinary program for preschool children 2 years 9 months till 6 years of age with weight issues and their families/caregivers, is a pilot research project that aims to promote healthy weights and healthy lifestyles for preschool children with weight issues and their families. This research will contribute to the creation of evidence-based strategies effective in addressing obesity in young children.

Program overview

“FOR HEALTH” aims to support participating families in developing a healthy lifestyle within their daily routines by providing hands-on experiences to increase nutritional knowledge, physical activity levels, and self-esteem. Establishing a healthier lifestyle will decrease the rate of weight gain and lead to a healthier weight (assessed by calculating BMI z-score from measured height and weight), and reduce the risk of developing obesity-related diseases.

“FOR HEALTH” is a lifestyle intervention held by a multidisciplinary team knowledgeable in working with young children, consisting of a registered dietitian, an exercise specialist, a psychologist, and a paediatrician. It consists of an intensive 4-month part with 6 weekly and 6 bi-weekly sessions (1 introduction, 9 group and 2 individual sessions). This is followed by a 2-month maintenance phase with one session per month (2 group, sessions), and two follow-up visits 3 and 6 months after the maintenance phase. The intervention will be held at the **YMCA London, Centre Branch, 382 Waterloo Street**. Free parking and free childcare for young siblings will be available for participants.

About 10 young children with a body mass index (BMI) at or above the 85th percentile on their growth chart will be enrolled in the first phase of this study, and 32 children in the second phase. Children enrolled in the second phase will be randomized to 1 of 2 start dates (groups).

Program eligibility

Your child / you as a family are eligible to participate in this study if your child's weight is meeting the above mentioned criteria, your child is between 2 years 9 months and 6 years of age, you live in or around London, and at least one parent / caregiver agrees to:

- 1.) attend all the program sessions with the child
- 2.) complete the study questionnaires (on physical activity, quality of life, and a 3-day food record) at the required time points
- 3.) provide a deposit of \$50.00. A reduced deposit amount will be offered to families with financial restraints. The deposit will be refunded in full at the end of the program if at least 80% of the program sessions were attended.

I am potentially interested in participating in this program: what next and where can I get more information?

If you are interested in participating in or hearing more about the program ***please answer the following few questions and contact us, or take this sheet to your physician or dietitian.*** They will be able to answer some of the questions you might have and to guide you in your next steps.

Instructions: Please tell us ***how confident*** you are that you can do the following ***within the next 12 months.*** Please **circle** the number that **best** describes your opinion.

1. I can change my family's eating patterns to keep my child / children from being overweight.

1	2	3	4
Not confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident	Extremely confident

2. I can change my family's activity patterns to keep my child / children from being overweight.

1	2	3	4
Not confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident	Extremely confident

3. I can limit my child's / children's television viewing and computer use.

1	2	3	4
Not confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident	Extremely confident

4. I can reduce my child's / children's intake of sodas, juice, or other sweetened drinks.

1	2	3	4
Not confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident	Extremely confident

5. I can remove the television from my child's / children's bedroom. **If there is none:** I can make sure there will be no television in my child's / children's bedroom.

1	2	3	4
Not confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident	Extremely confident

6. I can reduce my child's / children's intake of fast food.

1	2	3	4
Not confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident	Extremely confident