

Family-Based Treatment of Obese Children

Long-term weight loss was associated with higher attendance at intervention sessions.

Few treatment programs have been designed for severely obese children. Investigators randomized 192 severely obese children in Pittsburgh (age range, 8–12 years; mean body-mass index, 32 kg/m²) to intensive family-based treatment or usual care for 18 months. The intervention included twenty 1-hour group meetings for children and adults separately for 6 months, followed by three meetings and three telephone calls for the next 6 months. Participants had no contact with program staff during the last 6 months of the study. The intervention emphasized increased activity, less time in sedentary behaviors, and average daily caloric intake based on body weight. Participants randomized to usual care received two nutrition consultations.

At 6 months, the treatment group had a significantly greater reduction in mean percent overweight (the primary outcome) than the usual care group, but differences were not significant at 12 or 18 months, except among children who attended at least 75% of the treatment sessions.

Comment: These results are not surprising. Very obese children can lose weight with intensive treatment. But the key to long-term success might be related to attendance at therapeutic sessions, which could foster better understanding and adherence to the advice being provided.

— [Howard Bauchner, MD](#)

Published in [Journal Watch Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine](#) October 28, 2009

CITATION(S):

Kalarchian MA et al. Family-based treatment of severe pediatric obesity: Randomized, controlled trial. *Pediatrics* 2009 Oct; 124:1060.

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