Obesity: Digital Health Interventions for Adolescents with Overweight or Obesity

Summary of Community Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation*

The Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF) recommends digital health interventions to assist adolescents with overweight or obesity with weight management. Evidence shows these interventions lead to small but meaningful weight reductions in adolescents with overweight or obesity.

Key Findings*

The CPSTF recommendation is based on a systematic review of 11 studies published through March 2019.

- Adolescents who participated in interventions experienced small decreases in weight or adiposity as measured by Body Mass Index (BMI) z-scores, percent body fat, and BMI.
- While the changes were small, they were considered meaningful.
- Interventions decreased depressive symptoms among adolescents in the four studies that measured this outcome.

What are digital health interventions for adolescents with overweight or obesity?*

These interventions are for adolescents aged 12-18 years who have overweight or obesity. They combine self-monitoring and goal setting using digital health (e.g., websites, mobile apps, or wearable devices) to increase adolescents’ awareness of healthy dietary or physical activity behaviors that help with weight management. Trained personnel moderate programs with oversight by healthcare providers including psychologists, health counselors, dietitians, nurses, and pediatricians.

Facts about Adolescents with Overweight or Obesity

- Obesity prevalence in the United States is 20.6% among youth aged 12 to 19 years.¹
- In 2018, 95% of teens had access to a smartphone.²
- Adolescent obesity is related to anxiety, depression, lower self-esteem, lower self-reported quality of life, social problems such as bullying and stigma, and type 2 diabetes, dyslipidemia, and hypertension.³⁻⁷

Learn More

*Read a complete summary of the systematic review and CPSTF Finding


CDC, Overweight and Obesity

www.cdc.gov/obesity

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² Pew Research Center, May 2018, "Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018"