

COCHRANE REVIEW ON OBESITY

Obesity is now considered to be a global epidemic (WHO 2000) It is noteworthy that being overweight in adolescence was a more powerful predictor of risk of long-term morbidity and mortality than being overweight in adulthood.

The importance of ***lifestyle interventions*** (combined dietary, physical activity and behavioural intervention) has been highlighted by several studies included in this review.

Evidence from this review shows that ***family-based, lifestyle interventions with a behavioural program*** aimed at changing diet and physical activity thinking patterns provide significant and clinically meaningful decrease in overweight in both children and adolescents compared to standard care or self-help in the short- and the long-term. The effect size was more significant for adolescents in the longer-term than for children under 12 years of age.

Parental involvement has been recognised as an important feature of behavioural programs, particularly in pre-adolescent children

In obese adolescents, consideration should be given to the use of either orlistat or sibutramine, in the context of a lifestyle change program, although such therapy needs to be carefully weighed up against the potential for adverse events.

No surgical study met the inclusion criteria and these were thus excluded from this review.

Drawbacks in the studies:-

- In terms of validity, a number of the studies had small sample sizes, a likelihood of small study biases, relatively high drop-out rates, and unadjusted outcome measurements. Different measures for obesity were also used in the different studies. A large number of studies did not calculate changes in adiposity for age and sex.
- The findings from many of the included studies may be non-generalisable owing to sampling problems - the majority of research in the field has been conducted in motivated, middle class, Caucasian populations. The failure to address and measure vital and important psychological and social factors in these intervention studies hinder the potential for intervention effectiveness.
- Other than in the drug trials, adverse effects of the interventions were infrequently considered, and reporting of long-term outcomes beyond one year is also limited.