

Fit Families: Promoting Healthy Habits for Overweight Children and their Families

Introduction

Fit Families is a successful, interactive program that helps families adopt healthier lifestyles.

Objectives

To help families with overweight/at risk for overweight children:

- Eat healthy
- Get active
- Feel positive

Methods

Subjects

- Children 5-17 years of age with a BMI $\geq 85^{\text{th}}$ percentile
- At least one parent or guardian must accompany each participant, but all family members are encouraged to attend.
- Program participation is voluntary.
- Participants receive incentives that promote physical activity at each session.

Class Sessions

- Offered in English and Spanish
- 2.75 hours once per week for 7 weeks
 - Family meal/mindful eating-45 minutes
 - Separate adult and child classes in **nutrition** and **feeling positive**-35 minutes each
 - Family **physical activity**-35 minutes
- Hands-on activities and goal setting enhance each lesson
- Taught by licensed professionals

Methods, cont.

Instruments

- The School and Physical Activity Nutrition Questionnaire
- Harter's Self-Perception Profile for Children
- Behavior checklist
- Qualitative questionnaire



Data and Results

- Over 600 family members have participated.
- 81% of participant families graduated (attended at least 5 of the 7 sessions).
- Significant increase in the Healthy Foods Consumed Composite (HFCC) score ($p=0.0487$) and in consumption of:
 - Fruit ($p=0.0106$)
 - Fruit juice ($p=0.0384$)
 - Beans ($p=0.0136$)

Data and Results, cont.

- 82% reported eating meals together as a family.
- 83% used food labels to make healthy food choices.
- 85% ate healthy foods for snacks.
- 62% reported family physical activity for 60 minutes per day.
- Parents reported a marked improvement in their children's positive attitudes and self-esteem.

Conclusions

- Participants of this 7-week community-based outreach program reported significant improvements in composite intake of healthy foods, particularly fruit.
- Families reported improved knowledge and behaviors related to nutrition, physical activity, and positive feeling.

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