Peer leaders and adolescents participating in a multicomponent school-based nutrition intervention had dietary improvements


QUESTION: In adolescents, are varying levels of exposure to a multicomponent school-based nutrition intervention associated with varying dietary outcomes?

Design
Randomised (allocation concealed), unblinded, controlled trial with follow up of 1 school year.

Setting
16 schools in the metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St Paul, Minnesota, USA.

Participants
Students (mean age 12.8 years) in middle or junior high school. Schools were eligible if they had ≥20% of students approved for the free and reduced price lunch programme and ≥30 students in each of the seventh and eighth grades. 3878 students completed the baseline survey in fall 1998, and 3593 (90%) completed the year end survey in spring 1999 (51% boys, 69% white).

Main outcome measures
Student self report of fruit and vegetable consumption, and usual food choices scores (higher scores reflect a greater tendency to choose lower fat foods).

Main results
Over the 1 year follow up, differences between the groups (3 intervention groups and 1 control group) were seen for fruit and vegetable consumption (p=0.029). Students in the peer leader group consumed a greater number of daily servings of fruits and vegetables at the end of the school year (mean 4.88 servings, p<0.05); the other intervention groups and the control group showed no changes in fruit and vegetable consumption. Differences between the groups were also seen for the usual food choices scores (p=0.01). Students in the peer leader group and students who received classroom plus environment interventions showed improvements from baseline in their usual food choices scores (ie, a greater tendency to choose lower fat foods) (p<0.01); students who received the environment intervention only and those in the control group showed no changes in their usual food choices scores.

Conclusion
In adolescents, a peer leader and classroom plus environment school based nutrition intervention led to increased fruit and vegetable consumption and a greater tendency for choosing lower fat foods.

*Information provided by author.
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