

An Observational Study of an Employer Intervention for Children's Healthy Weight Behaviors.

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OBJECTIVE: This observational study was undertaken to assess whether changes in healthy weight behaviors could be advanced in a short-term intervention involving parents and children at IBM.

METHODS: IBM's Children's Health Rebate offered a cash incentive for parents to complete a 12-week program of self-selected activities in family food planning and meals, family physical activity, and sedentary time related to electronic entertainment ("screen time"). A preprogram/postprogram comparison of self-reported activities was used to assess behavior change. **RESULTS:** A total of 22,265 (52.3%) employees elected to participate, 11,631 (52.2%) of whom completed all program requirements and earned a \$150 cash rebate. Families completing the program reported significant changes in levels of physical activity, amount of entertainment screen time, and proportion of healthy meals. For example, family physical activity >3 times per week increased by 17.1 percentage points (from 23.2% to 40.3%), eating healthy dinners \geq 5 days/week increased by 11.8 percentage points (from 74.9% to 86.7%), and entertainment screen time <1 hour/day increased by 8.3 percentage points for children (from 22.4% to 30.7%) and by 6.1 percentage points for adults (from 18.1% to 24.2%). **CONCLUSIONS:** The results of this short-term observational study suggest that healthy weight behaviors in children, adolescents, and parents can be improved by using a Web-based intervention linked with a cash incentive. The results also show that employers can activate parents and support a role for employers in community-based strategies for obesity prevention in children. Experimental designs with biometric data would strengthen the suggestion of positive impact.