

Study: Lose weight while listening to your MP3 player (w/ Podcast)

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(PhysOrg.com) -- With obesity and weight-related illnesses on the rise, researchers continue to look for better ways to help people shed extra pounds and keep them off. A new University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill study finds that help may be as close as the earbuds on your MP3 player.

“Our interest was in using emerging technologies to help busy people maintain their interest in becoming healthier,” said Gabrielle M. Turner-McGrievy, Ph.D., postdoctoral fellow in the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health’s nutrition department and the study’s lead author.

“The [MP3 player] technology has some advantages over the Internet,” Turner-McGrievy said. “It feels more personal when someone is using earphones, as if someone is speaking directly to you. We want to take advantage of that intimacy and tailor messages that will bring success to people looking for ways to reach a healthy weight.”

The study, “Pounds Off Digitally (POD) Study: A Randomized Podcasting [Weight Loss](#) Intervention,” is published online on Sept. 15 in the *American [Journal of Preventive Medicine](#)*.

The study involved a 12-week randomized controlled trial of 78 overweight men and women ([body mass index](#), or BMI, of 25 points to 40 points) in the Raleigh-Durham area. Participants in a control group listened to 24 episodes of a currently available weight-loss podcast, while another group listened to an enhanced podcast, designed using behavior

change theories.

The enhanced podcast used tenets of social cognitive theory - including that behavior change is based upon an individual's expectancy (how much they would value an end result) and expectation (whether they believe they will succeed or fail). The recordings included exercise and nutrition information, a soap opera that discussed weight loss and an audio journal of another person trying to lose weight but whose progress was a week or two ahead of the participant's. For example, as participants worked on setting calorie goals, decreasing fat intake and increasing exercise, they could observe that the audio diarist was able to set goals, adjust to setbacks and succeed behaviorally.

Study participants who used the enhanced podcast experienced a significantly greater decrease in both weight and BMI than the control group. The enhanced group lost 6.4 pounds in 12 weeks, compared to 0.7 pounds in the control group, and dropped one point in BMI, compared to a 0.1 point drop in the control group.

"I found the nutrition and exercise information very useful," one participant said. "It was also nice to hear people talking about how you don't just take a pill and 'Bam!' You just dropped 10 pounds!"

Another reported that the podcasts were "informative, contained good tips and were a very special motivator" and that they were "fundamental in producing what I believe is a permanent change in my lifestyle."

Turner-McGrievy said she would like to examine whether podcasting can be used longer-term to help people maintain weight loss. She is also interested in whether podcasts directly targeted to participants' needs, such as helping them make healthy choices when eating out, would result in greater weight loss.

Provided by University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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