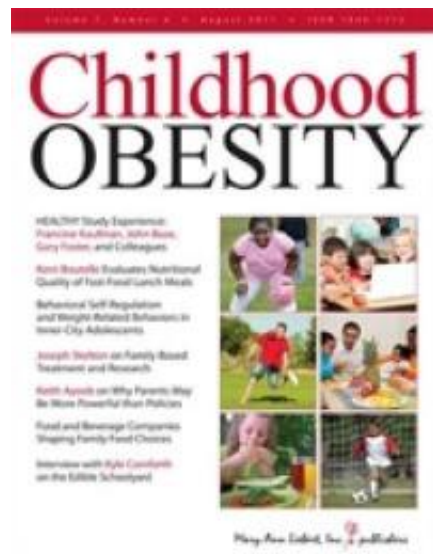


Positive impact of growing public awareness of obesity epidemic

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Childhood Obesity is a bimonthly journal, published in print and online, and the journal of record for all aspects of communication on the broad spectrum of issues and strategies related to weight management and obesity prevention in children and adolescents. Credit: ©2011 Mary Ann Liebert Inc., publishers

Increasing public awareness of the childhood obesity epidemic may be contributing to evidence of overall reductions in body mass index (BMI), a measure of obesity in children, according to the results of a nationwide study presented in *Childhood Obesity*.

The HEALTHY Study tested the effects of a public health intervention strategy for lowering BMI among middle school students. Half of the

schools participating underwent no changes (the control group), while the other half (the intervention group) instituted changes in their nutritional and [physical education programs](#) as well as promotional events and educational activities intended to bring about behavior change.

Francine Kaufman, MD (Children's Hospital Los Angeles, CA), Kathryn Hirst, PhD (George Washington University, Rockville, MD), John Buse, MD, PhD (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Gary Foster, PhD (Temple University, Philadelphia, PA), and colleagues from the HEALTHY Study Group were surprised to find that students in both the control and intervention groups had very similar reductions in BMI. The BMI decreased by more than 4% for both groups of students from the start of 6th grade to the end of 8th grade. The authors discuss the possible factors that contributed to these results in the article entitled, "Effect of Secular Trends on a Primary Prevention Trial: The HEALTHY Study Experience."

"In a research study, we of course want to see a difference between intervention and control groups," says David L. Katz, MD, MPH, Editor-in-Chief of [Childhood Obesity](#) and Director of Yale University's Prevention Research Center, "but both groups doing well is clearly a good problem to have! The news about weight trends in children has been all bad for a long time—this study suggests that an aggregation of awareness, policies, and programs may be starting to change that."

More information: The article is available online at <http://www.liebertpub.com/chi>.

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