

ECO: Behavioral treatment for obesity effective in children

May 14 2012



Photo: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(HealthDay) -- Behavioral treatment for obesity is much more effective for younger children than for adolescents, according to a study presented at the European Congress on Obesity, held from May 9 to 11 in Lyon, France.

Pernilla Danielsson, Ph.D., from the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, and colleagues examined outcomes of a behavioral obesity program involving 643 obese children. Children were categorized by age (6 to 9 years, 10 to 13 years, and 14 to 16 years) and by [body mass index](#) standardized age- and gender-dependent deviation score ([BMI SDS](#)), where a BMI SDS of 1.6 to 3.5 kg/m² was moderately obese and a BMI SDS of 3.5 kg/m² or greater was severely obese.

For moderately obese children, the researchers found that there was good clinical decline in BMI SDS in younger children, while the treatment efficacy was less pronounced, but still significant, in older children. A larger treatment effect was seen for severely obese young children, whereas, after three years, severely obese adolescents had no change in BMI SDS. Severely obese 10- to 13-year-old boys had a significantly greater mean decline in BMI-SDS than girls. Severely obese children had a greater mean decrease in BMI SDS if their mothers were normal weight rather than obese.

"Behavioral treatment is successful when initiated early in life both for moderately and severely [obese children](#)," Danielsson and colleagues conclude. "[Adolescents](#) with severe obesity show no effect at all of behavioral treatment."

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Citation: ECO: Behavioral treatment for obesity effective in children (2012, May 14) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-05-eco-behavioral-treatment-obesity-effective.html>

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