

Stepped-care intervention results in weight loss, at lower cost

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Although a standard behavioral weight loss intervention among overweight and obese adults resulted in greater average weight loss over 18 months, a stepped care intervention resulted in clinically meaningful weight loss that cost less to implement, according to a study in the June 27 issue of *JAMA*.

"Most [weight loss](#) programs are intensive during the initial weeks of treatment, become less intensive over time, and maintain a fixed contact schedule for participants irrespective of [treatment success](#) or failure. Intensive weight loss programs are costly and require substantial time commitments from the participants, making them impractical in many circumstances. An alternative is a stepped-care approach. It involves an initially low-intensity intervention that is increased if weight loss milestones are not achieved at fixed time points. Stepped care has been effective for treatment of other [health conditions](#). In theory, stepped care could result in better weight loss than [conventional therapy](#) because treatment intensity is escalated if weight loss goals are not met during the treatment period," according to background information in the article. "If shown to be an effective and a lower cost alternative to traditional in-person programs, a stepped-care approach could prove to be a cost-effective means for [obesity treatment](#)."

John M. Jakicic, Ph.D., of the University of Pittsburgh, and colleagues examined whether a stepped-care weight loss intervention (STEP) would result in greater weight loss compared with a standard behavioral weight loss intervention (SBWI). The clinical trial included 363 overweight and

obese adults ([body mass index](#): 25-

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