

Supermarket access key ingredient in obesity programs

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Living close to a supermarket appears to be a key factor in the success of interventions to help obese children eat better and improve their weight, according to a study to be presented Saturday, May 3, at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) annual meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Urban neighborhoods and rural towns without access to fresh, healthy and affordable food are known as food deserts. Instead of supermarkets and grocery stores, food deserts sometimes have only fast-food restaurants and convenience stores.

Few studies have looked at whether living farther from a large [supermarket](#) affects the success of interventions to improve eating habits and reduce weight.

The authors of this study analyzed data from a randomized, controlled trial that took place in 14 pediatric practices in Massachusetts. The trial compared two interventions to help [obese children](#) ages 6-12 years old eat [healthier foods](#) and improve their weight. The first intervention included electronic decision support to help clinicians manage [obese patients](#), while the second intervention included decision support and parent health coaching. There also was a control group that received usual care.

Results showed that children in the intervention groups living closer to a supermarket were able to increase their fruit and vegetable intake more

than those living farther away. Those living farther away from a supermarket in the intervention groups had a larger increase in [body mass index](#) as well.

Distance from a supermarket did not affect the amount of sugar-sweetened beverages consumed.

"As our nation strives to improve the health of our children, we must look to children's neighborhoods and provide easier, healthier choices for families," said lead author Lauren G. Fiechtner, MD, fellow in the Division of Gastroenterology and Nutrition and Health Services at Boston Children's Hospital and research fellow in the Division of General Academic Pediatrics, MassGeneral Hospital for Children.

More information: Dr. Fiechtner will present "Proximity to Supermarkets Modifies Intervention Effects on Diet and Body Mass Index Changes in an Obesity Randomized Trial" from 8-8:15 a.m. Saturday, May 3. To view the study abstract, go to www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view...hp?nu=PAS14L1_1155.1

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