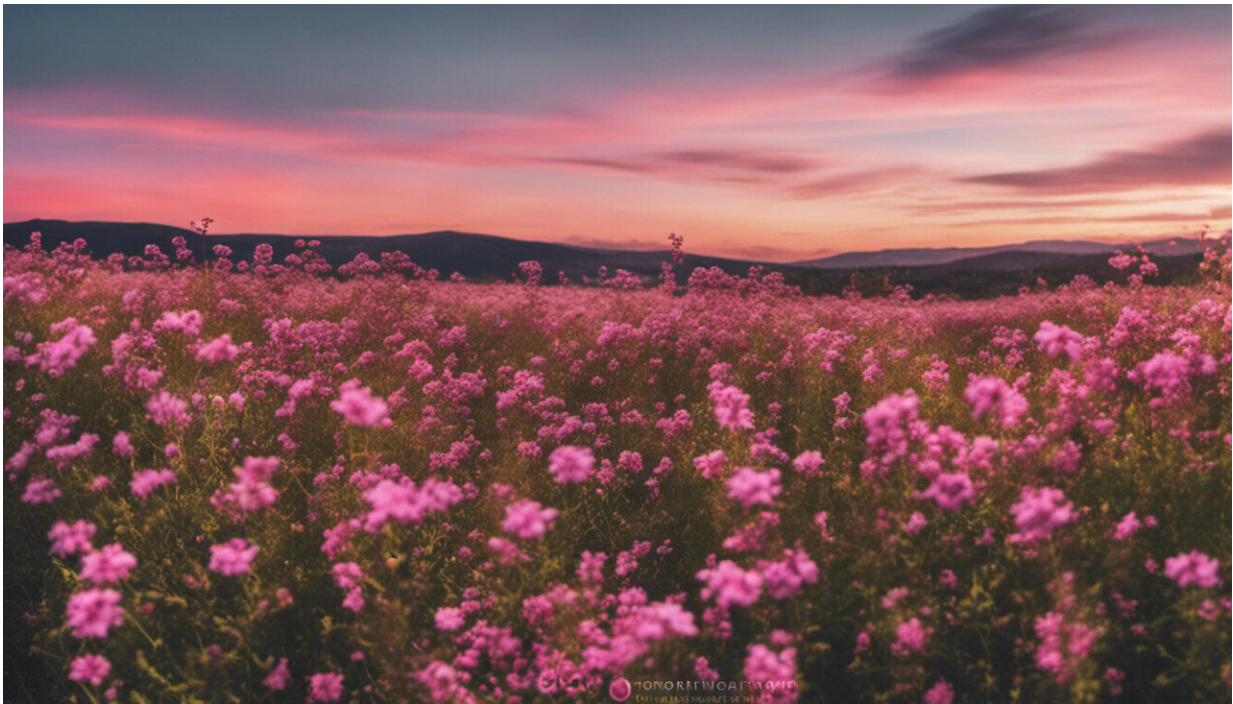


More support maintains adolescent's healthy turnaround

December 12 2014, by Carys Garland



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Health professionals say more support is needed to help adolescents maintain healthy lifestyle changes after a period of intervention.

The recommendations come after Curtin University researchers analysed behavioural changes in adolescents during and after completing Curtin's

Activity, Food and Attitudes Program (CAFAP).

The program involved an intensive eight week period where 69 teenagers and their parents attended two sessions a week for two hours and a 12 month follow-up program of phone calls and text message [support](#).

Program leader and Curtin University physiotherapy Professor Leon Straker says while most participants maintained positive [lifestyle changes](#), further support could have helped those who didn't.

"Typically with programs like this, during the intensive part of the program, people are getting a lot of support and most people are able to make some changes," Prof Straker says.

"[But] as the amount of support diminishes they're trying to maintain different habits over a longer duration and they tend to slip back into what they were doing beforehand.

"What we've found is providing some support was useful, but perhaps more support would be better and getting people to support each other."

Support needed to improve subsequent quality of life

Provisional psychologist Ashley Fenner says participants' quality of life improved after the program, but is likely to decrease if they don't receive additional support.

"We were looking at the psychological outcomes and that's related to their health-related quality of life and similar outcomes where the intervention was about to effectively change or improve their health-related quality of life," she says.

"In terms of depressive symptoms that was also explored and enhanced at the six month period.

"Initially there were changes following the [intervention](#) in their own motivation however that returned to baseline levels during the follow-up period."

Prof Straker says support for the teenagers meant reminding them about positive aspects of eating healthily, being active and encouraging them to ask themselves why they were setting goals.

"The messages that people are getting need to be personalised so people understand how much they are eating that's not healthy and how inactive they are in their lives so they can really see that they know what is good to be doing, but also to get support to help them to do it because it's actually quite hard to change habits," he says.

Prof Straker says while family support is key, there needs to be community support in terms of services or programs that promote physical activity and healthy eating.

More information: "The Impact of Curtin University's Activity, Food and Attitudes Program on Physical Activity, Sedentary Time and Fruit, Vegetable and Junk Food Consumption among Overweight and Obese Adolescents: A Waitlist Controlled Trial." *PLoS One*. 2014 Nov 6;9(11):e111954. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0111954](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0111954). eCollection 2014.

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