

Could a new computer program help your baby stay healthy?

May 18 2015, by Cerri Evans



A new computer programme will help health visitors to calculate the likelihood of babies becoming overweight in later life.

The [digital technology](#), called ProAsk (Proactive Assessment of Overweight Risk during Infancy), uses answers given by parents to determine how likely it is their baby will develop a weight problem when they are older, compared with other babies.

Questions are based on identified risk factors such as parental weight and lifestyle during pregnancy, baby's [birth weight](#) and growth, which research has shown increase the risk of a baby rising above a [healthy weight](#) as they get older. They are asked by health visitors during home visits, and the data then imputed via a tablet computer.

The University of Lincoln is working on the project, which is being led by Anglian Ruskin University. The study will examine whether parents and carers find ProAsk helpful and whether health visitors can use the results to tailor their advice to parents, who can explore possible ways to help keep their babies at a healthy weight.

Professor Niro Siriwardena from the University of Lincoln's School of Health and Social Care, will work with the team sharing his expertise in primary care. He said: "Childhood obesity is an epidemic affecting many children and families. It begins in early infancy and has implications for health and well-being throughout a person's life

"This study seeks to test the feasibility of healthcare staff identifying risk and preventing [childhood obesity](#) early in infancy in preparation for formal testing in a clinical trial. It will have important implications for preventative healthcare."

Sarah Redsell, Professor of Public Health at Anglia Ruskin, is the principal investigator for the study. She said: "Children who are above a healthy weight are more likely to be ill and have time off school. Being very overweight in childhood can also sow the seeds for health problems in later life such as heart disease and diabetes. One approach is to try and intervene early in life."

Provided by University of Lincoln

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