

# HeLP-her cluster RCT shows weight gain prevention among women in rural Australia

January 19 2016

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The year-long HeLP-her intervention prevented a weight gain of nearly 1 kg on average among women living in rural Australia, according to trial results published this week in *PLOS Medicine*. The trial, conducted by Catherine Lombard of Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, and colleagues, suggests that low-intensity lifestyle programs can prevent persistent weight gain among women in similar settings.

The researchers randomly assigned 41 Australian towns to either the study intervention or a control group. In the 21 intervention towns, women received a 1 year self-management lifestyle intervention consisting of one group information session with simple health messages, a program manual to facilitate personalized [weight gain](#) prevention, monthly reminder text messages, and one 20-minute personal phone coaching session. In the 20 control towns, women received one 45-min group education session on general women's health topics, including guidelines on diet and physical activity, without individual advice. In total, 649 [women](#) with an average baseline BMI of 28.2kg/m<sup>2</sup> participated in the trial. After one year, the average weight change was +0.44 kg (95% CI -0.09 to 0.97) in the control arm of the trial and -0.48 kg (95% CI -0.99 to 0.03) in the intervention arm, a between group difference in weight change of -0.92 kg (95% CI -1.67 to -0.16). The intervention also improved diet quality and self-management behavior and was equally efficacious across all age, BMI, income, and education subgroups.

Nearly a quarter of the participants did not complete the trial, and a

longer follow-up is needed to determine the long-term effects of the [intervention](#). However, these positive results suggest that simple, non-prescriptive health messages can be an effective weight gain prevention strategy. The authors state, "[t]he findings support population strategies to halt the rise in obesity prevalence."

**More information:** Lombard C, Harrison C, Kozica S, Zoungas S, Ranasinha S, Teede H (2016) Preventing Weight Gain in Women in Rural Communities: A Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial. *PLoS Med* 13(1): e1001941. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1001941](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001941)

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