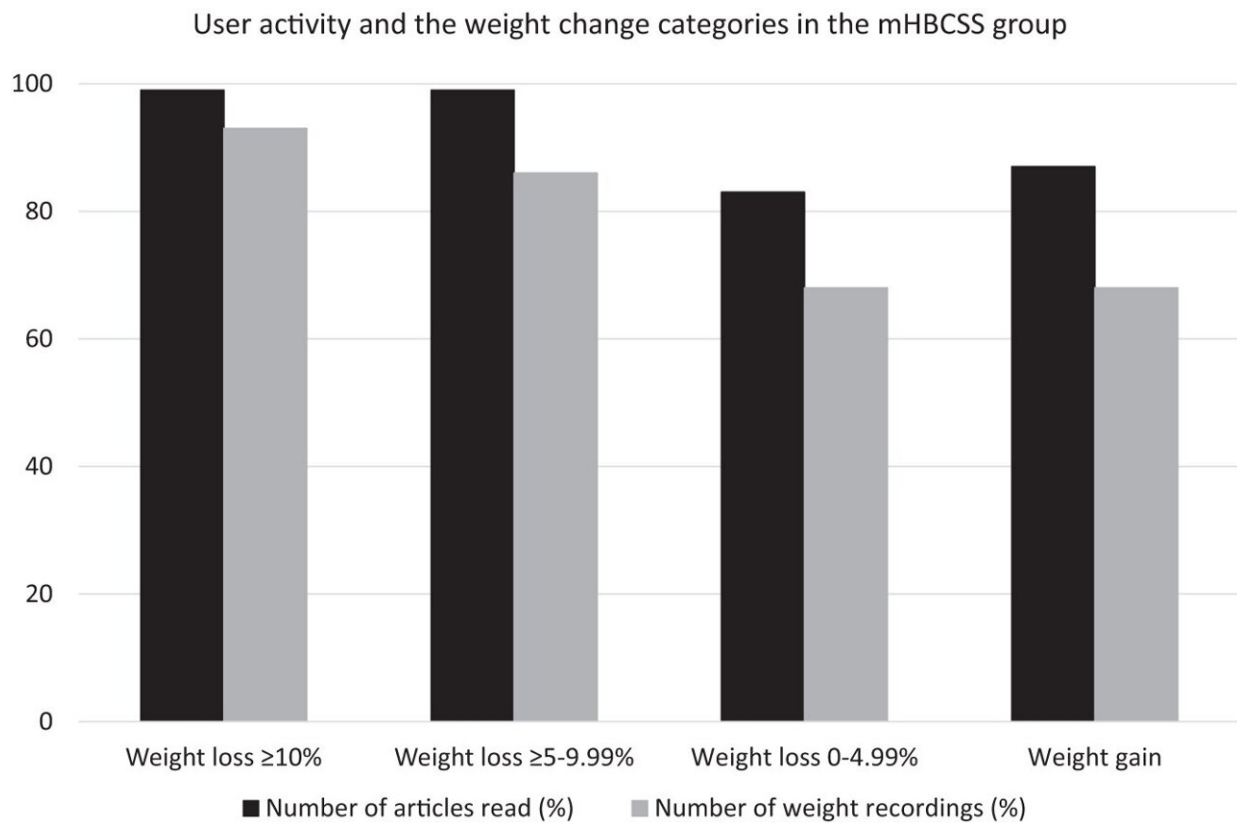


# New app found to be an effective aid in the treatment of obesity

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Number of articles read during the 6-month use of mHBCSS by weight change categories ( $p = 0.014$ ) and number of weight recordings during the 6-month use of mHBCSS by weight change categories ( $p = 0.015$ ). Credit: *International Journal of Obesity* (2023). DOI: 10.1038/s41366-023-01426-x

Onnikka is based on the Persuasive Systems Design method developed at

the University of Oulu under the leadership of Professor Harri Oinas-Kukkonen, with a focus on guiding behavior change. Onnikka has now been developed into a mobile application, and according to the results of a recent trial, it is an effective tool for self-management of obesity.

The trial investigated whether a mobile phone app could help in [weight loss](#) when used alone, without additional support measures. A total of 200 participants with a [body mass index](#) (BMI) of 30–40 kg/m<sup>2</sup> took part in the study. The trial compared those who used the mobile Onnikka app with a control group. The control group also received access to the app, but only six months after the start of the study.

The results of the trial demonstrate that the [weight](#) of those using the mobile Onnikka app decreased significantly over six months (-2.5%), while the [control group](#) experienced a slight weight increase (0.2%). The positive effect of the mobile Onnikka app persisted even after 12 months in the mobile Onnikka group (-2.1%).

Participants in the study showed exceptional commitment to using the app, as they were very active users of the app during the intervention and nearly 90% of them were still participating in the trial a year later. Typically, most users of lifestyle apps discontinue usage shortly after starting.

The results indicate that mobile Onnikka effectively supports weight loss, and the positive impact lasts for at least a year. "Mobile Onnikka could be at least a partial solution to the growing obesity epidemic," says Professor Janne Hukkanen, who led the clinical trial.

Participants in the study received no other treatment for their obesity besides mobile Onnikka. "This shows that the app is a resource-efficient option for large patient groups. Our study stands out qualitatively with its large number of participants and long follow-up period," notes

Hukkanen.

The recent study was conducted as part of the R2B (Research to Business) project in collaboration with Business Finland. During this project, a mobile version of the Onnikka weight management program was developed. At the conclusion of the study, the Onnikka Health company was established to commercialize the mobile Onnikka app and make it widely available to health care organizations. The study was [published](#) in the *International Journal of Obesity*.

Health care providers can offer Onnikka to their patients. Pilots have been launched, including in the Central Finland well-being services county, as well as in Vantaa and Kerava.

In Finland, there are approximately 1.2 million individuals with obesity. "Digital treatment for [obesity](#) is a viable self-care option, and we have now demonstrated its effectiveness when the digital treatment is based on research," says Professor Markku Savolainen, an emeritus professor at the University of Oulu and one of the main developers of the Onnikka weight management program.

**More information:** Jaakko O. Markkanen et al, Mobile health behaviour change support system as independent treatment tool for obesity: a randomized controlled trial, *International Journal of Obesity* (2023). [DOI: 10.1038/s41366-023-01426-x](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41366-023-01426-x)

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