Diet, physical activity, and behavioural interventions for the treatment of overweight or obesity in preschool children up to the age of 6 years

Globally, the prevalence of overweight and obesity has been increasing. In fact, in 2010, de Onis “used the World Health Organization growth standards to estimate that over 42 million children under 5 years of age were overweight or obese, with approximately 35 million of these children living in low- and middle-income countries.” Given the serious repercussions of childhood and adolescent obesity, developing effective treatment intervention should be a priority. Currently, “family-based interventions combining dietary, physical activity and behavioural components have been shown to be effective and are considered the current best practice in the treatment of childhood obesity in children under 12 years of age.” The objective of this review was “to assess the effects of diet, physical activity and behavioural interventions for the treatment of overweight or obesity in preschool children up to the age of 6 years.”

Primary outcomes included change in body mass index and body weight as well as adverse events. A total of seven randomised controlled trials were included in this review with a total of 923 participants. Overall, the review highlighted that “multicomponent interventions were more successful than the comparators in reducing body mass index and body weight in preschool children and their parents, and the effects were maintained two years after the start of the intervention.” However, the evidence remains limited and further research is needed.