Obesity and Weight Gain in Pregnancy and Postpartum: An Evidence Review of Lifestyle Interventions to Inform Maternal and Child Health Policies

Obesity during the pre- and post-pregnancy period is now seen as the new public health challenge, given its association with both short- and long-term maternal and child health negative outcomes. The aim of this review was to identify lifestyle interventions that have shown to be effective in controlling gestational weight gain, post-partum weight retention and thus improve maternal and child outcomes in order to inform health care professionals and policy makers.

A total of fifteen systematic reviews were included, all of which looked either at diet, physical activity or multi-component interventions. Based on the reviewed evidence, it seems like diet-based interventions are associated with the greatest reduction in gestational weight gain. Multi-component interventions also have positive outcomes. Furthermore, it seems like the perinatal period is a critical windows of opportunity with sustained long-term benefits. The review concludes that a multi-component approach including a balanced diet, with low glycaemic load, and light to moderate physical activity, 30–60 min per day 3–5 days per week, should be recommended from the first trimester of pregnancy and maintained during the postpartum.