Treatment of overweight and obesity in children and youth: a systematic review and meta-analysis

Given that childhood obesity usually persists into adulthood and is associated with adverse outcomes, treatment of childhood and youth obesity has become an active research area. One of the primary modes of treatment are of comprehensive behavioural interventions including changes in diet, physical activity and lifestyles. The aim of this review was “to provide an updated synthesis of the evidence on benefits and harms of overweight and obesity treatment interventions for children and adolescents feasible for use in or referral from primary care, and examined the features of efficacious interventions.”

Thirty-one studies were included in the analysis and overall, “the meta-analyses of BMI and BMI z-scores in this updated systematic review of treatments for overweight and obesity in children and youth showed moderate benefits for treatment compared with control.” Furthermore, “behavioural interventions for treatment overweight and obesity in children and youth are associated with a moderate treatment effect in terms of a lowered BMI and BMI z-score. Among the identified advantages of behavioural interventions are that they can be successful with minimal or no adverse effects.