OVERVIEW

Strategies designed to increase social support, particularly those that focus on the support role of families or parents, can be an important component of interventions targeting eating behaviors. Common programs using social support include those that work with families and parents, target peer influence, and provide support groups. These approaches help to create a supportive environment for healthy eating. Often, social support strategies are used in combination with other strategies such as personal counseling or as a component of comprehensive nutrition programs.

Supported by:
• The Community Guide by the Community Prevention Services Task Force

Settings:
Childcare, Health Care, School (including University), Worksite, Community

EXAMPLES

A clinic-based intervention targeted postmenopausal women who reported diets high in fat. Nutritionists led group sessions for women, who first met weekly for 6 weeks, followed by biweekly visits for 6 weeks, monthly visits for 9 months, and finally quarterly visits for another year. Participants created individualized goals for nutritional and behavior change and supported each other by sharing experiences, role playing, and helping solve problems.

A school-based intervention targeted families of obese children. Parents attended 14 support and educational group sessions led by a clinical dietitian, first meeting weekly for 4 weeks, followed by biweekly for 8 weeks, and then once every 6 weeks for 9 months. Topics discussed focused on increasing knowledge about healthy eating and related behaviors as well as increasing skills to support healthy eating behavior for themselves and their children (e.g., modeling and problem solving).

Research-Tested Intervention Programs (RTIPs)

Eating for a Healthy Life is a dietary change intervention administered by a faith-based organization to promote healthier eating choices for individuals and families. EHL includes a comprehensive manual and a step-by-step training guide to be implemented over an approximately nine month period.

Body and Soul is a faith-based program that aims to increase fruit and vegetable consumption through community events and church policy changes.

New Moves is a program for adolescent girls designed to promote behavioral changes, including healthy eating and physical activity, in a supportive environment that is accepting of different body types. New Moves is administered in a school physical education class over the course of a school year.
Planet Health uses an interdisciplinary curriculum, infused into regular school subjects, to improve activity and dietary behaviors among 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students. The program is delivered by classroom teachers to all students, not just those who are obese, and includes both nutrition and physical activity components.

The StrongWomen – Healthy Hearts program is a community-based intervention designed to reduce cardiovascular disease risk in sedentary midlife and older women who are overweight or obese. The 12 week curriculum includes both physical activity and dietary components.

**TRT REVIEWED INTERVENTIONS**

- Arkansas Healthy Employee Lifestyle Program for worksites
- Color Me Healthy for childcare and preschool settings
- Eat Well Play Hard for childcare settings
- Head Start Central Kitchen Initiative
- Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC)
- OSNAP Initiative: Strategies to Increase Drinking Water Access
- Trailnet: Healthy, Active, Vibrant Communities

**RESOURCES AND TOOLS**

**COMMUNITY**

- Healthy Women Build Healthy Communities Toolkit (Bright Futures for Women’s Health and Wellness, United States Department of Health and Human Services)
  This toolkit helps women plan, execute, and evaluate a healthy eating and/or physical activity event in their community. Based on “10 Building Blocks,” the tool focuses on social support, providing guidance, resources, and examples for women interested in developing community-wide initiatives.

- Social Support and Eating Habits Survey (Sallis, et al.)
  This resource is an abbreviated version of the Social Support for Diet and Exercise Behaviors survey. Developed by Sallis et al., the survey assesses an individual’s social networks and support for healthy eating.

**REFERENCES**