

## **School-based programs aimed at the prevention and treatment of obesity: evidence-based interventions for youth in Latin America**

Childhood obesity statistics are high across Latin America. Recent surveys in Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and Colombia show rapidly increasing numbers of children living with overweight and obesity. Within this region, schools have often been targeted as a vehicle for interventions due to their reach. Several studies in Latin American countries have examined the efficacy of such interventions. The purpose of this systematic review is to determine “the effectiveness of school-based intervention aimed at preventing or treating obesity among youth in LA [Latin America].”

This review examined 10 studies. Overall, it “found sufficient evidence to recommend school-based interventions to prevent overweight and obesity among children and adolescents in Latin America.” While treatment studies were promising, there is not yet enough evidence to give a recommendation. Researchers found that “the most successful interventions were characterised by their focus on prevention rather than treatment, by having longer follow-ups (>6 months), involvement of teachers as well as allied health professionals, better study designs and fewer limitations in execution.” The three studies that resulted in significant changes were conducted in different countries, which is extremely important because Latin America is “still heterogeneous in terms of socioeconomic status, language spoken and other cultural factors,” so interventions must be adapted for the community they are implemented in.

Reference: Lobelo F, Garcia de Quevedo I, Holub CK, Nagle BJ, Arredondo EM, Barquera S, Elder JP. School-based programs aimed at the prevention and treatment of obesity: evidence-based interventions for youth in Latin America. *J Sch Health*. 2013 Sep;83(9):668-77. doi: 10.1111/josh.12080.