

School-Based Physical Activity Programme in Preadolescent Girls (9–11 years): A Feasibility Trial in Karachi, Pakistan

Experts recommend that children exercise frequently and eat nutritious foods to prevent childhood obesity. However, studies have found only 20% or less of Pakistani children currently meet physical activity guidelines. Cultural, religious and safety considerations provide additional barriers for girls specifically. This study determined if a school-based exercise intervention targeting girls was feasible and effective in improving blood pressure and body mass index. Over a 20 weeks period, scientists recruited girls between 9-11 years of age without underlying conditions or physical disabilities. Two schools were select as a control group. Girls at these schools participated in recess but no other organised exercise. In the intervention schools, girls received 30 minutes of exercise (5 minutes of warm-ups, 20 minutes of aerobic exercises and 5 minutes of cool down) four times a week. After the conclusion of the study, the authors found it to be “feasible in terms of recruitment (77%), retention (79%) and treatment fidelity (86.2%) in girls' schools in urban South Asian public-school settings.” However, it was limited by the inability to randomise participants, use of convenience sampling and decision not to measure the number of students who participated in two or less sessions. Researchers recommend that subsequent studies use an objective measure of physical activity and increase the number of participants.

Reference: Almas A, Islam M, Jafar TH. School-based physical activity programme in preadolescent girls (9-11 years): a feasibility trial in Karachi, Pakistan. *Arch Dis Child*. 2013 Jul;98(7):515-9. doi: 10.1136/archdischild-2012-303242. Epub 2013 May 9. PubMed PMID: 23661575.