INTRODUCTION

There are significant and wide-ranging health benefits of physical activity; yet, the majority of adolescents in the United States do not engage in the recommended amount (Biddle, Gorely, & Stensel, 2004).

Physical activity tends to decline in early adolescence (Sallis, 2000).

Parents have a significant influence on adolescents’ levels of activity, indicating that parenting may be an especially salient target of interventions designed to promote physical activity (Sallis, Prochaska, & Taylor, 2000). Parental encouragement and instrumental support may increase adolescent physical activity (Pugliese & Tinsley, 2007).

Such encouragement and support may be more likely to exist in an atmosphere characterized by close family relationships and high parental engagement.

HYPOTHESES

Engagement in a family-management intervention in the 7th grade will result in adolescents’ increased physical activity in the 9th grade.

Physical activity, as a function of the intervention, will be mediated by changes in parental monitoring and family relationship quality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DATA ANALYSIS

Intention-to-treat (ITT) analysis in Mplus using a path analysis framework to test intervention effects on physical activity at two year follow-up. The ITT analysis included all families regardless of the degree to which they had accessed intervention resources. Hypothesized mediated effects were evaluated as part of the path analysis. We controlled for baseline physical activity, gender, minority status, and SES. Maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors (MLR) was used.

RESULTS

Being assigned to the intervention group predicted a 2.7-day increase in physical activity per month (p = .05).

There was no significant relation between intervention status and either family relationship quality or parental monitoring, therefore indirect effects were not tested.

MEASURES

Physical Activity
Youth report of number of days in past month got 20+ minutes of vigorous exercise

Parental Monitoring
Composite score from 5 items measuring youth perception of how often a parent knows his or her whereabouts, activities, and plans

Family Relationship Quality
Composite score from youth report on 6 items measuring degree to which family members share positive affect, mutual regard, enjoyable activities

MEASURES

Physical Activity

Parental Monitoring

Family Relationship Quality

CONCLUSIONS

The Family Check-Up has a positive collateral effect on physical activity in an ethnically diverse sample of at-risk adolescents.

More research is needed to identify the mechanism accounting for this effect.

Further study of family-centered intervention effects on health behaviors may inform new applications of these programs as a way to support primary health care.

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REFERENCES


