



The *get healthy*-stay healthy Research Project



Get Healthy Service

Free and confidential telephone-based health coaching offering expertise and motivation to help you set and reach goals to be a healthier you.

Extended contact text-message program

A health coaching program delivered via text messaging. The program sends tailored, automated and personalised text messages to a participant's mobile phone to support the maintenance of improved health behaviours, for another 6 months after the telephone-based health coaching.

BACKGROUND

Telephone-delivered health-coaching programs that target lifestyle changes can promote weight loss and associated physical activity and healthy diet.

But what can be done to help maintain these positive changes?

Research has shown that telephone-delivered programs that are run for extended periods of time (i.e. longer than 6 months) can help to reinforce important behavioural skills and improve maintenance of weight loss and associated healthy behaviours. One way to achieve extended contact, in a potentially cost-effective way, is through text messaging.

With this in mind, we conducted the *get healthy*-stay healthy Research Project, a world-first evaluation of a text-message delivered extended contact program to enhance or maintain change in physical activity, dietary behaviour and weight loss.

WHAT WE DID

Within the context of a Government-funded population-based telephone coaching service (i.e. the Get Healthy Service (GHS)), we conducted a randomised controlled trial to evaluate an extended contact text-message program (called *get healthy*-stay healthy). Participants were randomised shortly after completing 6 months of telephone coaching through the GHS into the text-message delivered program *get healthy*-stay healthy for a further 6 months. Data was collected at baseline, 6-months and 12-months.



Who Participated?

1071 clients who completed the GHS were invited to participate, with 228 participants taking part (intervention, $n=114$; control, $n=114$). Participants were mostly female (66.7%), with a mean age of 53.4 ($SD=12.3$) years and a mean BMI upon entering GHS of 29.5 kg/m^2 ($SD = 6.0$).

WHAT WAS INVOLVED

The 6-month **get healthy-stay healthy** program was primarily delivered via text messages that were individually tailored in terms of frequency, timing, content and wording. In order to tailor participant's text messages according to their preferences, participants received two telephone calls; one call at the start of the program; and another call during the middle. Participants also chose whether their focus was on a weight loss (no more than 2kg per month) or weight maintenance goal and whether they focussed on physical activity or diet or both behaviours (with targets consistent with national guidelines for physical activity and healthy eating).

WHAT WE FOUND

Participants taking part in the **get health-stay healthy** extended-contact program had significantly better weight and physical activity outcomes than those who did not receive any contact after the end of standard GHS telephone coaching. Specifically, significant results were observed at 6-months for change in weight (-1.35kg, 95% CI: -2.24, -0.46, $p=0.003$) and for physical activity maintenance in weekly moderate sessions (0.56 sessions/week 95% CI: 0.15, 0.96, $p=0.008$) and accelerometer-assessed moderate-vigorous physical activity (24.16 minutes/week (95% CI: 5.07, 43.25), $p=0.007$).

We also found that the extended contact via text messaging was a feasible and acceptable method for the participants. The majority (around 80%) of participants who received the program considered it to be useful in supporting their weight goal, and reported that they were "satisfied" or "extremely satisfied" with the intervention.

GET HEALTHY - STAY HEALTHY IN THE REAL WORLD

This evidence has been useful for scaling up the delivery of 'get healthy-stay healthy' as standard practice following the GHS telephone coaching program. Due to the positive outcomes achieved, the Cancer Prevention Research Centre, School of Public Health, The University of Queensland have collaborated with the NSW Ministry of Health and the GHS service provider, to ensure that the program will be delivered as designed, and is now available to NSW residents as of June 2016.

FIND OUT MORE If you have questions about our study contact Ms Genevieve Maher g.maher1@uq.edu.au

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