

Overview

Women who live below poverty, especially women from racial and ethnic minority groups, face higher rates of obesity. Gaining excess weight during pregnancy and then retaining this weight post-partum can place these women at risk for obesity. Weight loss studies with postpartum women have had limited impact. These studies have struggled with low attendance rates due to childcare, transportation, and scheduling needs. There is a need to develop effective post-partum programs that can be delivered in resource constrained settings where diverse low-income women seek care. This study pilot-tested a Facebook-delivered post-partum weight loss intervention for diverse low-income mothers.

Main Questions

- **Engagement:** Do women participate?
- **Retention:** Do women complete the program?
- **Weight loss:** Do women lose weight?
- **Satisfaction:** Would women recommend it to a friend?

Study

In collaboration with the Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) program in Worcester, Massachusetts, we implemented 3 pilot studies. The study adapted information from an existing intervention called Fresh Start. The team turned Fresh Start content into daily Facebook posts for weight loss, using text, photos, infographics and videos to provide women with knowledge, skills, and support. Feedback from participants was used to improve the Facebook posts over the 3 pilots. The intervention included an intensive 8-week phase with two posts per day and group interaction facilitated by a coach. An 8-week maintenance phase followed, with one post per day and no coach. The Institutional Review Board at the UMass Medical School approved the study.

The Bottom Line

Most participants participated in and completed the study, and would recommend the program to a friend. Over half of them lost weight. The intervention was acceptable to participants and could be feasibly delivered to diverse, low-income women.

Source

Silfee VJ, Lopez-Cepero A, Lemon SC, Estabrook B, Nguyen O, Wang ML, Rosal MC. Adapting a Behavioral Weight Loss Intervention for Delivery via Facebook: A Pilot Series Among Low-Income Postpartum Women. *JMIR Formative Res* 2018;2(2):e18. URL: DOI: 10.2196/formative.9597

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Acknowledgement: Support was provided by NIMHD (1 P60 MD006912-02), NHLBI Training Grant (1T32HL120823-01), and CDC (U48 DP005031-01). We thank the Worcester WIC Program and UMass Medical School colleagues. The findings and conclusions are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding sources.



Pilot Group 1: 27 participants

- **Engagement:** 62% of women posted, liked or replied to posts each week. 71% read the entire post most of the time or always
- **Retention:** 89% completed the final assessment at 16 weeks
- **Weight loss:** Average of 2.6 pounds
- **Satisfaction:** 79% of women would recommend the program to a friend

Pilot Group 2: 24 participants

- **Engagement:** 55% posted, liked or replied to posts each week. 70% read the entire post most of the time or always
- **Retention:** 83% completed the final assessment at 16 weeks
- **Weight loss:** Average of 2.5 pounds
- **Satisfaction:** 80% would recommend the program to a friend

Pilot Group 3: 16 participants

- **Engagement:** 67% posted, liked or replied to posts. 43% of women read the entire post most of the time or always
- **Retention:** 88% of women completed the final assessment at 16 weeks
- **Weight loss:** Average of 7 pounds
- **Satisfaction:** 100% would recommend the program to a friend

Call for Action

Social media can be an effective way to involve new mothers from socio-economically disadvantaged groups in behavioral interventions for weight loss.