

Active for Life Year 5: a cluster randomised controlled trial of a primary school-based intervention to increase levels of physical activity, decrease sedentary behaviour and improve diet

Debbie A Lawlor,^{1,2*} Ruth R Kipping,¹
Emma L Anderson,^{1,2} Laura D Howe,^{1,2}
Catherine R Chittleborough,³ Aida Moure-Fernandez,¹
Sian M Noble,¹ Emma Rawlins,¹ Sian L Wells,¹
Tim J Peters,⁴ Russell Jago⁵ and Rona Campbell¹

¹School of Social and Community Medicine, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK

²Medical Research Council Integrative Epidemiology Unit, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK

³School of Population Health, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, SA, Australia

⁴School of Clinical Sciences, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK

⁵Centre for Exercise, Nutrition and Health Sciences, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK

*Corresponding author

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Plain English summary

Active for Life Year 5 cluster RCT

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We investigated if training teachers and providing them with materials for lessons and homework helped 10-year-old children to adopt healthier behaviours. The teaching programme, called Active for Life Year 5 (AFLY5), included 16 lessons and 10 homework assignments. It was given to children in 30 primary schools in year 5, at the end of which the children from those schools were compared with children from 30 control schools that did not have the AFLY5 intervention. Whether or not the schools were given AFLY5 was decided randomly (e.g. by flipping a coin). We studied both sets of children at the end of year 5 and again at the end of year 6 (during which no schools had AFLY5). We found that children from schools that received AFLY5 were neither more active nor less sedentary than those from the control schools. They also did not eat any more fruit and vegetables. Children from schools that had the AFLY5 intervention spent less time at weekends looking at screens (e.g. televisions or computers) and ate fewer snacks and drank fewer servings of high-energy drinks than children from control schools. Our study, which also included interviews with teachers, parents and children, suggests that more substantial changes in schools than the ones that we tested, and also changes in families and communities, might be necessary to get children to adopt healthier behaviours.

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Editorial contact: nihredit@southampton.ac.uk

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