

Child-care self-assessment to improve physical activity, oral health and nutrition for 2- to 4-year-olds: a feasibility cluster RCT

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

More than one in five children starting primary school in the UK are overweight or obese. This study wanted to see if it was possible to use an American programme called NAP SACC (Nutrition And Physical Activity Self Assessment for Child Care) to make nurseries a place where children can be physically active, eat good food and have good oral health. We changed the programme by adding oral health and making the food and activity recommendations the same as UK standards. We also developed a website for parents to make changes at home. Six nurseries were randomly chosen to deliver NAP SACC UK and six continued as usual to provide measurements as a 'control group'. Health visitors helped nursery managers to look at what they did at nursery and to set goals to improve physical activity, nutrition and oral health. Nursery staff attended workshops on these topics, led by local experts. We took measurements from 168 children aged 2–4 years. We evaluated the programme over 5 months to check if it was delivered as we hoped it would be and if the staff and parents were happy with it.

We found that the programme and methods we used were acceptable to most nursery staff, health visitors and parents. Five out of the six nurseries using NAP SACC UK followed the programme as we hoped they would (one did not because of staff capacity for out-of-hours training). Health visitors liked the programme but were worried that they would not have the time to work with nurseries. The study was small, so we cannot be sure whether or not it improved children's health, but it may help to increase physical activity and reduce snacks, overweight and watching television at home. We will now test this fully in a large trial.

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