

Behavioural interventions to promote physical activity in a multiethnic population at high risk of diabetes: PROPELS three-arm RCT

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Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

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Plain English summary

PROPELS three-arm RCT

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Plain English summary

When someone has type 2 diabetes, it means that their body no longer does a good job of controlling the sugar in their blood. This gives them a higher risk of other health problems. Fortunately, people can avoid getting type 2 diabetes if they can change their lifestyle.

We wanted to know whether or not an education programme could help people at high risk of getting diabetes to become more physically active and, if so, whether or not they were still more active and healthier 4 years later. We also wanted to know whether it made a difference if we used text messages and telephone calls to support them and whether it worked better for some ethnic groups than others.

We put 1366 people into one of three groups at random. The first group received an advice leaflet. The second group attended (in groups of up to 10 participants) a 3-hour education programme called 'Walking Away from Type 2 Diabetes' to help them to change their behaviour and then attended a group-based refresher session every year. The third group received the same education programme and the refresher sessions, but also received text messages and telephone calls to give them extra support.

We measured how active the participants were at the start of the study, after 1 year and again 3 years after that (i.e. 4 years after the start). Then we looked at whether or not the Walking Away programme, with and without the extra support of text messages and telephone calls, did a better job of encouraging people to be more active than just giving them the advice leaflet.

We found out that the Walking Away programme, when combined with text messages and telephone calls for support, did help participants to take over 500 more steps per day during the first year; however, when we checked again at 4 years, we found that the effects had worn off. Neither option proved to be good value for money.

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This report

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