

Facilitators and barriers of lifestyle counseling in overweight truck and bus drivers

Puhkala J, Aittasalo M, Mansikkamäki K, Tokola K, Kukkonen-Harjula K, Fogelholm M.

Purpose: It is difficult to improve professional drivers' lifestyle. We developed a structured monthly counseling program to reduce weight in long-distance drivers. Here we report facilitators and barriers of lifestyle change.

Methods: Male drivers with waist circumference >100 cm were randomized to a 12-month lifestyle counseling (LIFE, N=55) and a reference (N=58) group. LIFE participated in 6 individual face-to-face and 7 phone sessions on diet and physical activity (PA). Main dietary goals were to balance meal frequency and to increase use of vegetables and fruit. PA goal was to increase walking. Monthly goals, facilitators and barriers, and adverse effects due to PA were based on counselors' records.

Results: Forty-seven LIFE participants attended 12-month measurements. Dietary and PA patterns improved compared to baseline. The most frequent dietary goals dealt with meal frequency, plate model, and use of vegetables and fruit. Typical facilitators for reaching the dietary and PA goals were support from family and friends, ailment prevention and good quality roadside resting places. The most common barriers were working schedules, ailments and own or family attitudes and habits. Adverse effects, most often mild joint or muscle pain, occurred among 83% men in LIFE.

Conclusions: The most common facilitators were family and friends and the most common barriers working schedules. Musculoskeletal pain was common, implicating the importance of a slow start to increase PA.