

## CATCH Early Childhood Evidence Summary

CATCH Early Childhood (EC) is a preschool-based program designed to encourage physical activity and healthy eating in children ages 3-5. CATCH EC includes 4 components: 1) It's Fun to be Healthy! classroom curricula consisting of interactive nutrition and garden-based lesson plans and activities, 2) Structured physical activities provided in a CATCH EC Physical Activity Box, 3) Family education including tips for parents to incorporate nutrition and physical activity into home routines, and 4) CATCH EC Coordination Kit to guide center-wide collaboration and environmental changes that promote healthy behaviors. CATCH EC is modeled on the CATCH program which is effective in promoting healthy eating and physical activity [1, 2] and in reducing overweight and obesity [3, 4, 5]. Studies of CATCH EC have shown similar positive trends in physical activity and dietary behaviors and in the prevalence of overweight.

- CATCH EC was implemented over 2 years with 3- to 5-year old children across Head Start centers in Houston and Austin, TX as part of the Texas Childhood Obesity Research Demonstration Study (CORD). Results demonstrated significantly lower BMI z-scores and BMI percentiles from year 1 to 2 follow-up among those in intervention centers compared to those in comparison centers [6].
- CATCH EC was implemented in three Head Start sites in Harris County, TX as part of the Head Start on Healthy Living (HSHL) project. Participants were primarily Hispanic and African American and all were low-income. Results:
  - A statistically significant increase in indoor vigorous physical activity in the intervention group compared to the control group [7].
  - A statistically significant increase in the intake of fruits and vegetables among intervention and control groups [8].
  - A 4% decrease in overweight and obesity in the intervention group (38.1% vs. 34.1%) and no change in the control group, although the difference between groups was not statistically significant [8].
- The CATCH EC physical activity curriculum was implemented for 10 weeks in 4 small childcare centers located in Vermont. Three of the 4 centers experienced positive trends in the time children spent in moderate-to vigorous physical activity (34.5% vs. 39.3%) from baseline to follow-up [9].
- CATCH EC was implemented with low-income children in two Head Start centers in Harris County, TX for 6 weeks. There were positive trends in fruit, 100% fruit

juice and vegetable intake and mean minutes of physical activity at school pre-to-post intervention, however these increases were not statistically significant [10].

- CATCH EC is currently being implemented in over 50 JCC Early Learning Centers nationwide. Evaluation results suggest that CATCH EC has been effective in reducing the intake of whole milk in favor of lowfat or skim milk, increasing time spent in physical activity, and increasing the serving of fruits and vegetables during snack time.
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