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Weight Gain Prevention in an Employed Adult Population: Effectiveness of Holiday Survivor

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Adult weight gain during the holidays (Nov.-Jan.) averages 0.5 kg though it varies as much as -7 to 4.1 kg among individuals. Holiday weight gain usually results from excess energy intake and decreased expenditure. This study describes the implementation of a holiday weight maintenance program in a worksite setting and looks at its long-term impact on employee weight. Program participants formed teams of four with co-workers to support one another with mindful eating and physical activity through the holiday season. The goal was to maintain weight during this 10-week period. Participants completed pre- and post- surveys about physical activity, eating behaviors, social support, and program participation and weight and umbilical circumferences were measured by project staff. 102 employees enrolled with a mean 2.45 kg reduction in body weight ($p < .0001$) and a 1.1 inch reduction in waist circumference ($p < .0001$). Overall, 82% of participants lost weight and 3% maintained their weight. Self-reported PA increased, fast food consumption decreased, and fruit and vegetable intake increased. Participants reported that weigh-ins, fitness classes, cash prizes for winners, walk/runs with their team, giveaways, and logging meals were important to their success. Participants who participated in the program in successive years gained some of the weight lost back, but did not return to their pre-program weight (91.7 vs 91.4 kg). A team-based behavioral weight-management program was effective for weight loss during the holiday season and was effective for weight maintenance over a year period.

Biography:

Mark Wilson is Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, UGA Foundation Professor in Public Health in the Department of Health Promotion and Behavior, and Director of the Workplace Health Group, all in the College of Public Health at the University of Georgia. His research encompasses evaluating environmental and behavioral interventions and translating and disseminating programs to worksites. Mark has worked with a variety of multi-national organizations on projects ranging the development and evaluation of a healthy work organization intervention to translation of a weight management program.