**Project title:** The effect of an online lifestyle behaviour change program for parents of preschool-aged children on weight and related risk factors.

**Purpose of the research**

Early childhood is a critical time for the development of healthy lifestyle practices and it is recognised that parents are important role models in the early years of life. This project will investigate the effect of an online healthy lifestyle program for parents of pre-school aged children on child weight, body composition, nutrition intake, physical activity, screen time and sleep. Families who have a preschool-aged (2-5 years) child who is on or above the 50th body mass index (BMI) percentile are eligible to join the study.

**Researchers**

The research team includes Professor Tony Okely, Dr Rachel Jones and Mrs Megan Hammersley from the University of Wollongong .The contact details for the researchers are:

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**What we would like you to do**

The research will be conducted with one parent and child per family, with most of the activities being carried out within your own home. If you choose to participate in this research, we will ask you to attend an initial appointment with your child at the University of Wollongong (or in an alternative setting if you live more than one hour away). At this appointment, your child will have the following measures taken - height and weight to calculate body mass index (BMI) and body composition (measured by a bioelectrical impedance scale), which should take no longer than 10 minutes. We will also ask for your child to wear an Actigraph accelerometer (a device that measures physical activity and sleep, which is fitted around their waist with an elasticised band) over a 7-day continuous period. Parents will be asked to complete questionnaires asking about their child’s dietary intake, child feeding practices, screen-time, sleep, role-modelling and self-efficacy (your confidence in being able to support your child in healthy lifestyle behaviours). These questionnaires should take around 40-45 minutes in total to complete. These measurements will be completed at the start of the study, approximately 11 weeks later and again around 6 months and then 12 months after the start of the study. In recognition of your time, you will be provided with a gift voucher for you and your child to attend the University of Wollongong Early Start Discovery Space (or an alternate gift voucher if you do not live in the Illawarra region) after you attend each of the follow-up appointments (at 11 weeks, 6 months and 12 months after the commencement of the study).

This study is a randomised controlled trial. This means that half of the participants involved will be allocated to an intervention group and the other half to a control group. The research team will still take the same assessments described in the preceding paragraph, so that we can compare these with the intervention group. After the initial measurements have taken place, you will be randomly assigned to the ‘Time2bHealthy’ (intervention) or ‘Raising Children’ (control) group. The ‘Time2bHealthy’ group will receive access to an online program over an 11 week period. A series of modules on a number of topics, such as healthy eating, physical activity, screen time and sleep will be provided. Each module will take approximately 30 minutes to complete and can be done at a time that is convenient. The modules will require some reading and activities and you will be provided with email support. The program will also have a Facebook component and it is therefore required for you to have an active Facebook account in order to be eligible to participate. A secret Facebook group will be used, meaning that your membership of the group should not be visible to your Facebook friends. However, we cannot guarantee anonymity. We recommend that you set your privacy controls on Facebook so that you do not share more information than you intend to. Further information on Facebook groups is available at <https://www.facebook.com/help/412300192139228/>

The ‘Raising Children’ group will receive regular fortnightly emails featuring links to information on topics such as healthy eating, physical activity, screen time and sleep. Participants in this group will also be provided with access to the ‘Time2bHealthy’ program at the completion of the follow-up data collection period at 12 months. Access to this program will be provided without the additional email or Facebook group support.

**Possible risks, inconveniences and discomforts**

Apart from the inconvenience for your child wearing the accelerometer device, the time taken for measurements and completing the questionnaires, we foresee minimal risks for parents and children who partake in this study.

Your involvement in the study is **voluntary**. Declining to participate in the study will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong, nor will it affect your relationship with any organisation through which you may have been recruited. You may withdraw your participation from the study at any time and you can also withdraw any data up until the time that the study is submitted for publication. You are also able to withdraw yourself and any comments from the Facebook group.

**Privacy and your information**

To ensure confidentiality, all participants will be allocated a participant identification number which will be used for data analysis and writing up of results and therefore your name or your child’s name will not be able to be identified in relation to your data. Please feel free to contact a member of the research team via phone, or email if you have any concerns about this at any point during the study. Any data will be stored securely by the research team in a locked filing cabinet or in password-protected files for electronic information. We will store the data from this study for a minimum of five years. The information collected from the study will be analysed and published in a thesis, journal articles and may be presented at conferences. Funding for this study has been provided by Australian Health Management.

**Benefits of the research**

Overweight and obesity in children is associated with a range of short- and long-term health consequences. Overweight children have at least twice the risk of remaining overweight into their adult life compared to children in the healthy weight range. Healthy lifestyle programs can reduce the likelihood of overweight and obesity continuing on into adulthood. This study will assess the effect of an online healthy lifestyle program for parents in reducing child weight and improving risk factors for overweight and obesity such as eating patterns, physical activity, screen time and sleep.

**Ethics review and complaints**

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 4457 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Thank you for your interest in this study.