

Internet Weight-Management Information-Seeking Behavior and Diet, Weight, and Physical Activity Outcomes

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Background

- Prior research has focused on Internet health information-seeking behavior as a response to health-threatening situations (e.g., illness diagnosis).
- We hypothesized that individuals may also seek health information online to maximize positive health outcomes (e.g., healthy lifestyle content).

Objectives

Accordingly, we examined associations between:

- Self-reported use of online diet, weight, or physical activity information during the previous year and
- Diet, weight, and physical activity knowledge and behaviors

Method - Data

- Data were from the 2007 Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS, $n=7,658$).
- An extensive panel of demographic questions were included in the HINTS survey.
- Linear and logistic models, accommodating the HINTS survey design and adjusting for demographics, were computed.

Method - iWMIB

A single measure was created to assess Internet weight-management information-seeking behavior (iWMIB). It included three levels:

- Not accessing the Internet (31.1%)
- Accessing the Internet without iWMIB (42.2%)
- Engaged in iWMIB during the prior year (26.7%)

Method - Weight

Three measures assessed weight:

- Body mass index (BMI)
- "Do you feel Underweight (1) to Overweight (5)"
- "Have you tried to lose any weight in the past 12 months?" (yes/no)

Method - Physical Activity

Two measures assessed physical activity:

- How many days a week of physical activity or exercise of at least moderate intensity are recommended for the average adult to stay healthy?
- In a typical week, how many days do you do any physical activity or exercise of at least moderate intensity?

Method - Diet

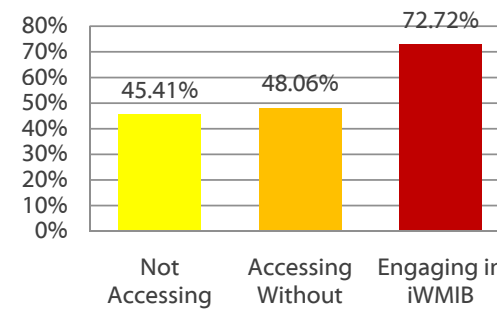
Two measures assessed dietary knowledge and practices:

- How many servings of fruits and vegetables do you think a person should eat each day for good health?"
- How many servings of fruits and vegetables do you usually eat or drink each day?

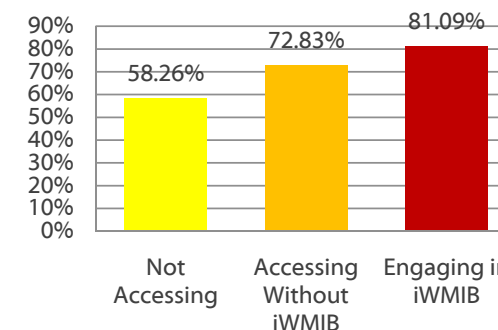
Weight Assessment Across iWMIB



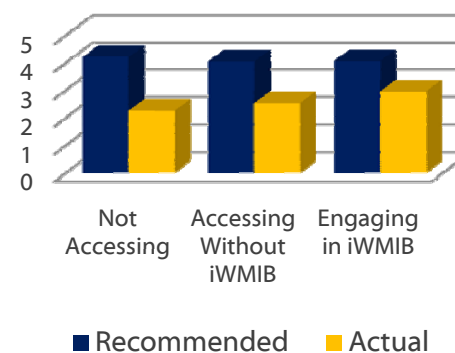
Tried to Lose Weight



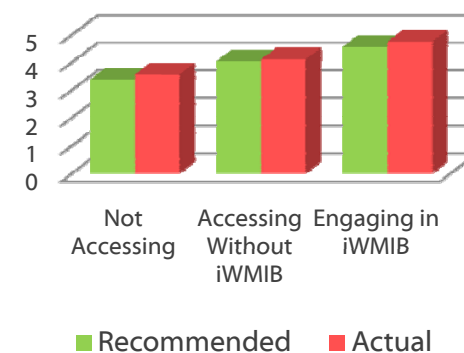
Any Physical Activities



Physical Activity Days per Week



Daily Fruits & Veggies Servings



Results

Respondents engaged in iWMIB, compared to those not accessing the internet:

- Reported more accurate weight self-assessment
- Were more likely to have tried weight lose and engaged in exercise
- Ate more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

Conclusions

- Internet weight-management content is used by many overweight adults and appears an effective resource for promoting healthy lifestyle dietary and physical activity recommendations.
- These considerations should inform tailoring and targeting in future weight-management endeavors.

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