

The Affect of Sex and Age on Selection of Weight Loss Method

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ABSTRACT

The high rate of overweight and obesity in the United States has contributed to increased efforts in weight management. National Health and Nutritional Exam Survey (NHANES) data collected from 2011-2012 revealed 35% of the 6,175 survey respondents confirmed that they tried to lose weight in that time period. The purpose of the current study was to investigate whether sex and age affected the selection of weight loss method. Using Chi Square analysis, NHANES data were utilized to determine if the frequency of choosing a particular weight loss method was associated with either sex or age. Predetermined age groups were: 18 to 29 years, 30 to 39 years, 40 to 49 years, 50 to 59 years, and 60 years or more. The weight loss methods were: (a) changed food/beverage consumption, (b) used prescription or nonprescription diet pills, (c) performed exercise, (d) joined a support group, (e) sought professional help, or (f) exhibited unhealthy behaviors. In the 2011-2012 NHANES data collection, 2,409 respondents indicated they tried to lose weight. Females (8.4%) used prescription or nonprescription diet pills more than males (4.8%), and joined support groups at a higher rate than males (females, 7.4%; males, 2%). The 50 to 59 and 60 years or more age groups chose prescription or nonprescription diet pills less than other age groups at 4.3% and 2.9%, respectively. Exercise participation was selected by 75.4% in the 18 to 29 age group and 48.7% in the 60 years or more age group. Unhealthy behaviors were lowest in the 60 years or more age group (12.5%), while highest in the 18 to 29 age group (18.1%). In every age group, females chose prescription or nonprescription diet pills at a higher rate than males. Males participated in exercise more than females in all age groups except the 50 to 59 age group. Females in every age group chose to join a support group more than males. Lastly, females sought professional help more often than males in all age groups except the 60 years or more age group where the sexes were the same. For health professionals to facilitate successful weight loss in individuals, sex and age should be considered. An individual's sex or age may impact their choices and therefore outcome of weight loss.