

Internet-based Intervention to Improve Dietary Habits in Women of Color: SAVING Lives Staying Active (SALSA)

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ABSTRACT

Background: The Internet is an inexpensive method to distribute information that spans large distances. With 2/3 of the country currently overweight or obese, the Internet is the obvious choice to delivering health information to those that need it most. **Purpose:** The aim of this study was to determine the effectiveness of an Internet-based intervention to increase fruit and vegetable (FV) and decrease fat consumption in women of color. **Methods:** Women ($N=50$) were middle-aged ($M=41.2$ years, $SD=9.6$), overweight ($M=29.6$ kg/m², $SD=5.3$) and well educated (74% were college graduates). Participants completed measures of FV and fat consumption at 4 time points (spaced 4 weeks apart). All were randomized to a (1) 4-week web-based dietary education or (2) bi-weekly Latin dance group. After 4 weeks of intervention, women switched groups to ensure that everyone received both treatments. Women logged onto the SALSA website, where information on improving dietary habits, tools and activities were posted weekly. A total number of visits was logged for each participant and coded as visited less than once a week or one or more times per week for analyses. **Results:** Women were not meeting FV ($M=4.2$ servings, $SD=5.2$) or fat ($M=30.9\%$ kcal from fat, $SD=3.1$) consumption recommendations at baseline, with no differences between groups. Women who visited the site at least once per week increased FV consumption over time ($F(3,93)=.587$, $p=.019$) compared to women who did not visit the site at least once a week, regardless of intervention order. Women who visited the website as the first intervention saw greater decreases in fat consumption ($p=.046$). **Conclusion:** Greater access and awareness of dietary habits information online increased FV consumption and decreased fat consumption. Internet-based interventions may be used in at least some groups of women of color to change dietary habits. Future studies are needed to determine which website features are most important for behavior change.

KEY WORDS : Internet intervention, Web intervention, Dietary habits, Fruit and vegetable, Fat consumption, Women, African American, Hispanic