

Title of Intervention and Website: Using minimal contact communication strategies to increase physical activity

Intervention Strategies: Individual Education

Purpose of the Intervention: To increase physical activity through mail-delivered, self-instructional exercise packets

Population: Adult women employed full-time in a clerical position at a research university.

Setting: Home-based

Partners: None mentioned

Intervention Description:

Participants were randomly assigned to receive one of three mail-delivered, self-instructional, personalized written exercise packets.

- Individual Education: The lifestyle exercise packet encouraged individuals to integrate more activity into their daily activities. Packets were seven pages long and written at the eighth grade reading level. Packets included information on participants' health status, predicted body fat percentage, predicted oxygen consumption and stage of exercise. The structured exercise packet was identical to the lifestyle packet in terms of length, readability and format. It encouraged participants to follow a standard exercise prescription with specific recommendations for frequency, intensity and duration. The fitness feedback packet only informed individuals of their health status, predicted body fat percentage, and predicted oxygen consumption.

Theory: Stages of Change; Social cognitive theory

Resources Required:

- Staff/Volunteers: staff to prepare and individualize packets
- Training: not mentioned
- Technology: computers and printers
- Space: not mentioned
- Budget: not mentioned
- Intervention: postage, informational packets and access to participant addresses
- Evaluation: Cardinal's five item scale survey, follow-up surveys and statistical software

Evaluation:

- Design: Randomized control trial
- Methods and Measures: Cardinal's five-item ordered categorical scale based on the trans-theoretical model of behavior change was used at baseline to assess stage of exercise. Follow-up surveys were administered at 1 month and 7 months after baseline. Data collected was analyzed using statistical software.

Outcomes:

- Short Term Impact: not mentioned
- Long Term Impact: A significant improvement in stage of exercise was seen for all three groups.

Maintenance: Not mentioned

Lessons Learned: Mail-delivered, self-instructional exercise packets appear to be an effective method of motivating, encouraging and supporting progression through the stages of exercise - this is a potentially powerful and inexpensive intervention.

Citation(s):

Cardinal BJ, Sachs ML. Prospective analysis of stage-of-exercise movement following mail-delivered, self-instructional exercise packets. *Am J Health Promot* 1995;9(6):430-2.