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Stay with me: an eHealth application for parents of overweight children

Submission date
17/10/2023

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
11/12/2023

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
02/07/2026

Condition category
Other

[X] Prospectively registered
[_] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[_] Results
[_] Individual participant data
[X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Parents play a crucial role in shaping children's dietary and activity behavior and are essential partners in treatment but are insufficiently involved. To address this concern, this study will evaluate a new eHealth tool for parents in the form of a mobile application. The app delivers a theory-based lifestyle change recommendations tailored to the parental role in promoting healthy behaviors. Its development was guided by the conceptual framework of Rhee (2008), which emphasizes both direct and indirect parental influences on child weight-related behaviors, as well as by the principles of Goal Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 1990), which stress the importance of setting specific, achievable, and personally relevant goals in facilitating behavior change. The content and functionality of the app were informed by evidence-based guidelines on healthy lifestyle and parenting. From a co-creation perspective, it was developed with the input from parents and professionals. During an initial exploratory phase, focus groups were conducted to assess user needs and feasibility in order to create and later adapt a first version of the app. The current app consists of several elements. First, we included 6 psycho-education modules, each reflecting a different aspect of a healthy lifestyle: eating behavior, physical activity, self-esteem and body-image, emotion regulation, sleep, and parental stress management. Second, we implemented a goal setting tool for parents to plan SMART changes amongst the health domains that can be tracked and of which parents receive notifications. Third, we added daily tips for keeping the parents engaged. Finally, we also added a "dropbox" in which parents can gather questions for their next session with the caregiver.

Who can participate?

Parents who possess a smartphone and are fluent in Dutch and have a child between 5 and 14 years old with overweight.

What does the study involve?

The study involves a baseline phase of varying baseline durations (1, 1.5 or 2 weeks) for which participants are randomly assigned to. As this study investigates the added value of m-health together with standard care, the baseline phase is a period in which participants receive treatment as usual. Next, in the intervention phase, parents will use the app as a form of blended care for 2 weeks. After this period of 2 weeks, parents are free to choose whether they want to continue using the app. Primary outcomes (intention, attitude, perceived behavioral

control and knowledge) will be assessed daily during the baseline and intervention phase. Secondary outcomes (parenting stress, positive parental behaviour, perceived support and healthy parental behavior) will be assessed at four timepoints: at the start of baseline, after baseline, post intervention, and after 6 weeks follow-up.

Where is the study run from?
Ghent University (Belgium)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
June 2024 to December 2026

Who is funding the study?
The Kom Op Tegen Kanker foundation of Belgium

Who is the main contact?
Maurane Desmet, Maurane.Desmet@Ugent.be

Contact information

Type(s)
Public, Scientific

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Study information

Scientific Title
Stay with me: an eHealth application for parents of children with overweight: a protocol for a mixed-method study

Acronym
Stay with me

Study objectives
An improvement in parent variables regarding parental skills, parental stress, the family climate, and family activities. We will explore the impact of parent characteristics (gender, ethnicity, marital status and SES). Third, we will evaluate treatment adherence. We expect a dose-response relationship, meaning that higher adherence will be significantly correlated with the outcome improvements.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 17/12/2025, Commissie voor Medische Ethiek of University Hospital Ghent (UZ Gent) (Ingang 75, route 7522, C. Heymanslaan 10, Gent, 9000, Belgium; +329 (0)332 33 36; ethisch. comite@uzgent.be), ref: -

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Interventional multiple baseline single case study

Study type(s)
Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Treatment of children with overweight - focus on parents

Interventions
The tool will offer model-driven lifestyle change suggestions for parents to use in conjunction with inpatient or outpatient treatment for their child. The eHealth tool will be based on an existing online psycho-education platform for parents of children with overweight called ‘Taking action’, in which already many parental behavior change techniques according lifestyle (e.g. affecting children’s dietary intake, physical exercises, sleep, family climate) are included, based on the model of Rhee (2008). This content will be combined with the input of parents and professionals on needs and preferences of use, gathered during focus groups and enriched with

interactive tools, which are easy to add in an application. The application will consist of: 1) psycho-education, 2) tools to change behavior to deal with weight problems, and 3) motivation-enhancing elements for behavioral change.

The intervention phase lasts 12 weeks. The baseline phase will last 3,5 or 7 weeks (multiple baseline design)

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
1. Parents' age, length and weight and variables linked to socio-economic status (education, profession, country of birth) measured before the baseline phases.
2. Parental feeding behavior will be assessed by the Child Feeding Questionnaire (CFQ) Dutch version before the baseline phases, weekly during baseline and intervention and after the intervention
3. Positive parental behavior will be assessed using a subscale of the Ghent Parental Behavior Scale – Short version (GPBS-S) before the baseline phases, weekly during baseline and intervention and after the intervention
4. Parenting stress will be assessed with the Short Form of the Dutch version of the Parenting Stress Index: the Nijmeegse Ouderlijke Stress Index (NOSIK) before the baseline phases, weekly during baseline and intervention and after the intervention
5. Emotion-coaching will be assessed using the Emotion-Coaching Dimension of the Short Form of the Emotion Related Parenting Styles (ERPS) questionnaire before the baseline phases, weekly during baseline and intervention and after the intervention
6. The adherence of the treatment will be extracted by the analytics generated by the application during the intervention. The number of days of app usage will be used.

Key secondary outcome(s)
We will also ask parents how they experienced using the app after the intervention via individual interviews.

Completion date
30/09/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Current inclusion criteria as of 09/02/2026:
1. The child's age being between 5 and 14 years old
2. The child's adjusted BMI >85th percentile
3. Parents possessing smartphone
4. Parents being fluent in Dutch

Previous inclusion criteria:
1. The child's age being between 5 and 14 years old
2. The child's adjusted BMI >85th percentile
3. Parents possessing smartphone
4. Parents being fluent in either Dutch, French, or English

Participant type(s)

Other

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Child

Lower age limit
5 Years

Upper age limit
14 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
40

Key exclusion criteria
Does not meet inclusion criteria

Date of first enrolment
02/03/2026

Date of final enrolment
01/04/2026

Locations

Countries of recruitment
Belgium

Study participating centre
AZ Jan Palfijn
Watersportlaan 5
Ghent
Belgium
9000

Study participating centre
Zeepreventorium
Koninklijke Baan 5
De Haan
Belgium
8420

Study participating centre
UZ Antwerpen
Drie Eikenstraat 655
Antwerpen
Belgium
2650

Study participating centre
UZ Brussel
Laarbeeklaan 101
Jette
Belgium
1090

Sponsor information

Organisation
Ghent University

ROR
https://ror.org/00cv9y106

Funder(s)

Funder type
Charity

Funder Name
Kom op tegen Kanker

Alternative Name(s)
Fight Cancer, komop_tegenkanker

Funding Body Type
Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype
Other non-profit organizations

Location
Belgium

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The datasets generated during the study will be available upon request from Maurane.Desmet@Ugent.be

IPD sharing plan summary
Stored in non-publicly available repository