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Testing how well a new online platform can support people living with overweight or obesity to lose weight

Submission date
30/01/2026

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
13/02/2026

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
16/02/2026

Condition category
Nutritional, Metabolic, Endocrine

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

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Many adults live with overweight or obesity, which can affect health and quality of life. Digital tools may help people manage their weight by supporting healthier eating and activity habits at home. This study looked at whether a new online system, called the Stop Obesity Platform or STOP portal, could help adults who are overweight or obese to lose weight. The main aim was to see if using the STOP portal over three months could support weight loss compared with not using the system.

Who can participate?
Adults aged 18 years or over could take part if they were overweight or obese, meaning they had a body mass index over 25 kg/m². Both men and women were able to join. Participants needed access to weighing scales and had to be able to give informed consent. People under 18 years or with a body mass index below 25 kg/m² could not take part.

What does the study involve?
Participants were randomly placed into one of two groups. One group used the STOP online portal for up to three months. This involved logging weight, food and drink intake, and physical activity, and interacting with features such as goal setting and a chatbot. The other group did not use the portal during the study period. Everyone recorded their weight and height at the start of the study and again after one, two and three months. Some participants were also asked to complete short online questionnaires about their experience. At the end of the study, people in the group that did not use the portal were offered access to it if they wished.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Possible benefits include gaining support and motivation for weight management and helping researchers improve future digital health tools. Participants also contributed to research that may benefit others in the future. There were no expected medical risks, as the study involved selfmonitoring and use of an online platform. Some people might have found tracking their weight or lifestyle habits inconvenient or uncomfortable.

Where is the study run from?
The study was run from Ulster University in Northern Ireland, with the research team based at the University of Ulster. Participants took part remotely using online systems.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
Participant enrolment took place in October 2022. Each person took part for up to three months, and the study was completed in January 2023.

Who is funding the study?
The study was funded through Horizon 2020, the European Union's research and innovation programme. The sponsor of the study was the University of Ulster.

Who is the main contact?
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Study information

Scientific Title
Obesity care and connected health platform feasibility study and randomised controlled trial (RCT)

Acronym
STOP

Study objectives
The aim of this pilot RCT was to determine the effectiveness of the newly developed system, STOP Portal, for overweight and obese adults to lose weight.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 30/06/2021, Ulster University Research Ethics Committee (Belfast campus, 2-24 York Street, Belfast, BT15 1AP, United Kingdom; +44 2895365028; researchgovernance@ulster.ac.uk), ref: CMFC-21-005

Primary study design
Interventional

Allocation
Randomized controlled trial

Masking
Blinded (masking used)

Control
Uncontrolled

Assignment
Parallel

Purpose
Device feasibility, Supportive care

Study type(s)

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Individuals living with overweight or obesity

Interventions
The intervention was the STOP Portal, online digital innovative tool that was available at: https://stop.projekt.onl/ The STOP platform captures various data from different smart sensor streams and chatbot technology.
Data collected on the STOP platform include:
• Fitness profile: gender, height, weight, fitness goal, activity level, allergies
• Fitness data: exercises, activities, food and water consumptions
• Knowledge resource (added by users if any): publication, multimedia, questions & answers, software
• Log: user activities on the platform (IP, URL, referrer, visit time, visit duration, user agent)
• Chatbot: chat protocol

The duration of the intervention was up to three months.

Randomisation
This was a two-arm trial:
1. intervention (n=15)
2. control (n=15).
The intervention group consisted of adults who are overweight (BMI 25.1-29.9 kg/m²) and obese (BMI >30 kg/m²) using the newly developed system, STOP Portal, while the control group were adults who are overweight and obese not using the system. Participants were randomised into one of the two groups using a computer randomised programme.

Procedures
Participants were randomly allocated into one of two groups. Those in the intervention group, were asked to access and use the STOP Portal via https://stop.projekt.onl/ for up to 3 months, and recorded their activity, food and water intakes. Those in the control group, did not have access to and use the STOP Portal. Measurements were recorded on four occasions, at four data collection points at baseline (month 0), month 1, month 2, and month 3. At the end of the RCT, all participants in the control group were offered access to the STOP portal, if they wish, which is not part of the research.

Outcome measures
The primary outcome is percentage reported weight loss. Based on weight loss for health gain, 10% weight loss is recommended, thus this RCT determined the percentage of participants with weight loss by three months. Four data collection points for both the intervention and control

groups were:
1. baseline (month 0)
2. month 1
3. month 2
4. month 3.
Regardless, of what group the participants were in, their weight and height were recorded at each of these four data collection points. Demographic information such as gender and age were collected. The plan before COVID-19, was to measure each participant's weight and height on the University campuses by the research team but it was measured and reported by the participants using the online STOP Portal or online survey for the control group. Participants in the control group submitted their measures including weight using an online survey via Qualtrics.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
1. Weight (kg) measured using scales at baseline (month 0), month 1, month 2, month 3

Key secondary outcome(s)

Completion date
31/01/2023

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Overweight and obese adults with BMI >25 kg/m²
2. Aged 18+ years
3. Male and female
4. Access to bathroom scales or equivalent to measure weight
5. Providing consent

Healthy volunteers allowed
Yes

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
18 Years

Upper age limit
100 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
30

Key exclusion criteria
1. Adults with BMI <25 kg/m²
2. Under 18 years
3. Unable to provide consent

Date of first enrolment
06/10/2022

Date of final enrolment
26/10/2022

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

Northern Ireland

Study participating centre
University of Ulster
Cromore Road
Coleraine
Northern Ireland
BT52 1SA

Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Ulster

ROR
https://ror.org/01yp9g959

Funder(s)

Funder type

Funder Name
Horizon 2020

Alternative Name(s)

EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020 - Research and Innovation Framework Programme, European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
National government

Location

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary
Not expected to be made available

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Other files	Adverts for weight loss organisationsgroups		06/02/2026	No	No
Other files	Adverts on social media, i.e. Twitter and Facebook-Jpeg		06/02/2026	No	No
Other files	E-mail to University staff and student populations - email for pilot RCT study		06/02/2026	No	No
Participant information sheet			06/02/2026	No	Yes
Protocol file		01/05/2021	06/02/2026	No	No