
Mini-weighing scales which alert children if they are eating too fast 'could help fight obesity'

Portable mini-weighing scales which alert children if they are eating too fast can help fight childhood obesity, experts believe.

By [Kate Devlin](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/kate-devlin/) (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/kate-devlin/), Medical Correspondent

Published: 7:30AM GMT 06 Jan 2010

Researchers found that the machines helped youngsters to lose weight, realise sooner when they felt full and cut their portion sizes.

One in five children in England is now overweight or obese by the time they start primary school, official figures show, and experts predict that the problem will only get worse in coming decades.

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However, there are few treatments which successfully help children lose weight in the long-term.

Researchers in Sweden have invented a machine, called the Mandometer, which aims to retrain children to eat less and recognise more easily when they feel full.

The device plots a graph which shows children the rate at which food is disappearing from their plate and compares this to an ideal rate set by a food therapist.

Tests on 106 obese children, aged between 9 and 17, carried out by researchers at Bristol University show that over the course of a year youngsters using the machine lost an average of between four and six pounds in weight, despite the fact that they were still growing.

The researchers said that the machine helped the children to lose weight more quickly than other treatments and therapies, in their findings, published by the British Medical Journal.

As well as using the machines the children were encouraged to exercise for 60 minutes of exercise a day and eat a balanced diet.

Tests on the group six months after the end of the experiment showed that the weight loss was maintained, suggesting that the Mandometer could have a long-term effect on children's eating habits.

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