

Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL)

Program Location: Kaiser Permanente, Santa
Clara Medical Center, California

Background Facts:

The Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL) program offers a 12-month intensive lifestyle medicine program, focused on pediatric weight management and medical risk reduction. This program is specifically designed for motivated patients and their families residing in the Santa Clara region, targeting individuals between 3 and 17 years of age.

HEAL's core vision is to treat and reverse pediatric obesity while simultaneously preventing and treating future chronic diseases through the promotion of healthy lifestyle choices. The program achieves this through a structured curriculum that incorporates individual and group classes along with goal-setting strategies.

Summary Statement:

The past three decades have witnessed a notable escalation in pediatric obesity, with the United States experiencing particularly high prevalence rates. Currently, one in six children in the U.S. is classified as obese, a rate that demonstrates a direct correlation with increasing age. The Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL) program was established in response to this public health challenge. This initiative actively addresses pediatric obesity through the implementation of lifestyle medicine principles, applied from early childhood onward.

Objective This 12-month lifestyle medicine program aims to demonstrate that a dedicated multidisciplinary team can positively influence the behaviors of both children and parents. The program seeks to facilitate the successful integration of lifestyle changes into the children's/families' daily routines.	Patient Eligibility Referred by a healthcare provider with the child's relevant medical information and diagnosis. • Children/parents motivated to make lasting lifestyle changes (observed through the Likert Scale). • Ages 3 – 17 with: ◦ BMI ≥ 95% or ◦ BMI > 85% and at least one complication (sleep apnea, joint pain, PCOS, high blood pressure, prediabetes, etc). • Pre-referral labs: A1C, lipid panel (fasting or non-fasting lipids), and ALT.	Program Design The first visit is a 90-minute virtual group orientation taught by the HEAL program's multi-disciplinary team that covers an introduction to Lifestyle Medicine, with an emphasis on nutrition, physical activity, stress management, sleep optimization, and behavior change through SMART goal settings, and a program description. There are two orientation offerings based on age: • HEAL (ages 8-17 years): This orientation is for both children and their parents. • HEAL Junior (ages 3-7 years): This orientation is designed for parents of younger children focused on parental guidance and strategies.
Funding Provided by the Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara Medical Center. Physician: Preventative Visit, Dx: Intensive Lifestyle Medicine program.		

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Program Design:

This medically supervised, 12-month program begins with a healthcare provider identifying eligible children and referring them through an E-consultation. A key strength of the program lies in its multidisciplinary team, which includes a lifestyle medicine board-certified pediatrician, a physical therapist, a psychologist, a registered dietitian, and a health educator. The program's core objective is to achieve BMI reduction and facilitate the treatment or reversal of chronic conditions through comprehensive lifestyle modifications for the entire family.

After the initial visit, the parents enroll in follow-up visits consisting of 4 pathways:

Pathway	Format & Frequency	Duration	Key Activities & Participants	Follow-Up
HEAL Academy	Monthly, in-person group workshops with a multi-disciplinary team.	6 months	Kids/Teens: 25-30 minutes of age-appropriate and engaging exercise with a physical therapist. Parents: Group support & goal setting with a psychologist. All: 20-minute interactive nutrition presentation, followed by 15 minutes hands-on cooking with the Physician & RD (Culinary Medicine). Food Rx Box to take home with cookbook/ recipes.	Pre- and post-program in-person visit. Post visit to plan next steps.
HEAL Clinic	Individualized in-person visits	12 months	One-on-one sessions with the HEAL team. First 6 months: monthly in-person visits, telephone/video visits with a health educator every month. Second 6 months: Individualized appointments every 1 – 6 months, depending on patient and team.	At 6 months, have a check-in with the team to plan the next 6 months (continue monthly or spread to every 2-3 months).
HEAL Jr. Chef	Monthly virtual interactive cooking classes	6 months (option to extend)	Families are provided with the recipes ahead and encouraged kids/family to cook along, making a meal/snack to enjoy at home. Nutrition education is provided throughout the session, which is led by Lifestyle Medicine physicians.	N/A
HEAL Total	Twice monthly for the first 6 months. Combination of in-person group academy visits along with individualized lifestyle appointments.	12 months	Combination of HEAL Academy and HEAL Clinic with the HEAL team.	N/A
Bonus Pathway: Heal 4 Families (Optional)	Monthly, 90-minute in-person group sessions with individualized visits.	3 to 6 months	Parents and Children: Comprehensive assessments at program entry, 3 months, and 6 months. These include behavioral questionnaires, lab tests, and biometric/body composition analyses. Findings reviewed during a physician consultation. 3 Food Rx Box to take home with cookbook/ recipes.	Ongoing monitoring and evaluation at 3 & 6 month post-program entry, including physician consultations to review assessment findings and progress.

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Outcome Measures:

The program employs a structured follow-up protocol to monitor participant progress. Initial follow-up appointments are conducted every four to six weeks, transitioning to every two to three months after the six-month mark, and culminating with a final assessment after the 12- to 24-month program. Weight, height, and blood pressure are systematically collected at every visit. Furthermore, behavioral questionnaires and biometric/body composition data are gathered at intake, six months, and twelve months to assess the child's progress.

Pre- and post-program assessment measures:

- Height
- Weight
- Blood Pressure
- Pre-referral labs: A1C, lipid panel (fasting or non-fasting lipids), and ALT
- Biometrics/ Body Composition (ACCUNIQ Machine)
- Internally developed Behavior Questionnaires based on the pillars of Lifestyle Medicine

Summary of Findings

- Significant increases in annual enrollment from 23 patients in 2011 to 299 patients in 2024.
- Consistent engagement with patients from all different age groups between the ages of 3 and 17.
- Expansion of the HEAL program to 3 other Kaiser Permanente Medical Centers starting in 2018.
- Expansion of the program in 2022 to include HEAL Jr. for families with children 3-6 years old in response to levels of engagement and positive feedback.

Implications for LM Practice

This 12-month program aligns with the American College of Lifestyle Medicine's (ACLM) core principles of nutrition, exercise, stress management, and healthy relationships, offering an effective model for facilitating lifestyle changes in children, reducing the rates of obesity and risk of chronic diseases in the future.

Program Limitations

- Low attendance rate at the initial orientation, and participants tend to withdraw during the 12-month program.
- Facilitating patient appointments after the orientation class.
- Incorporating families into the program becomes complex for modifying lifestyle behavior for the whole family.
- Class II and Class II Obesity patients have more limited success rates, suggesting additional support may be needed, including weight medication or bariatric surgery.

The program information above was provided by the Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL) Program, Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara Medical Center, through ACLM's Health System Council's Second Meeting of 2024, as they design, implement, and evaluate healthy eating through positive lifestyle changes in the lifestyle medicine program. For any specific information about the content or program, please contact Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara Medical Center directly.