INTRODUCTION: The purpose of this study was to examine the potential improvements in eating self-efficacy, eating behavior and other psychological factors in obese subjects participating in a weight management program. Psychosocial determinants could act as a link between lifestyle and obesity. Our objective was to study self-esteem and self-efficacy as determinants of general health behavior and to evaluate whether these are connected with obesity.

SUBJECTS: A total of 96 overweight girls: 17.6 y; mean body mass index: 31.2 kg/m²) were recruited from body building centers.

METHODS: Weight was measured by study personnel at baseline, and self-reported weight was assessed at 6 months; self-reported self-efficacy for weight control was assessed by the Weight Efficacy Lifestyle Questionnaire. The participants also completed the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale prior to weight management program and again 24 weeks after the program. High self-efficacy score was significantly associated with high weight loss among all participants. Also, high negative emotions and physical discomfort scores were significantly associated with high weight loss among all participants.

RESULTS: Results indicated that body mass index was inversely associated with global self-esteem and behavioral conduct. The correlation of the obesity index and self-esteem indicated that as weight increased self-esteem decreased.

Our findings suggest that the role of self-efficacy has an important role in obesity treatment regarding to weight control behavior. Efficacy can be enhanced and this enhancement is related to subsequent health behavior change.

CONCLUSION: As a conclusion, the findings of this study suggest methods for modifying health practices. These methods diverge from many of the current, traditional methods for changing health practices. Recommendations for incorporating the enhancement of self-efficacy into health behavior change programs are made in light of the most findings. More studies should be done to clarify whether increases in self-esteem are related to enhanced weight-loss.