

Does treatment of short or stunted children aged 6-59 months for severe acute malnutrition using ready to use therapeutic food make them overweight? Data from Malawi

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Abstract

Background: Using mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) to identify severe acute malnutrition (SAM) tends to identify younger and stunted children compared to alternative anthropometric case-definitions. It has been asserted by some experts, without supporting evidence, that stunted children with low MUAC may have normal weight for height and treatment with ready to use therapeutic food (RUTF) will cause excess adiposity, placing the child at risk for non-communicable diseases (NCD) later in life. It is recommended that children aged less than 6 months should not be treated with RUTF. Height cut-offs are frequently used in SAM treatment programmes to identify children likely to be aged less than 6 months and thus not eligible for treatment with RUTF. This is likely to exclude some stunted children aged 6 months or older. This study examined whether stunted children aged 6 months or older with SAM, identified by MUAC, and treated with RUTF were overweight or had excess adiposity when discharged cured with a MUAC of greater than 125 mm.

Conclusions: These results should allay concerns that children aged 6 months and older and with a height less than 65 cm or with severe stunting will become overweight or obese as a result of treatment with RUTF in the outpatient setting using recommended MUAC admission and discharge criteria.

Keywords: CMAM; MUAC; Overweight; RUTF; SAM; Stunting; Triceps skinfold thickness.



Biography

Mark Myatt is serving in the University College London, UK.

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[Annual Summit on Clinical Nutrition, Health and Fitness](#) | Webinar | Aug 24, 2020

Citation: Mark Myatt, Does treatment of short or stunted children aged 6-59 months for severe acute malnutrition using ready to use therapeutic food make them overweight? Data from Malawi, Annual Summit on Clinical Nutrition, Health and Fitness, Webinar, Aug 24, 2020, 03