

The effects of implementation intentions on exercise self-efficacy and behavior

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Objectives Implementation intentions have been shown to increase performance of a variety of health behaviors (Armitage, 2004; Milne, Orbell, & Sheeran, 2002). With regard to exercise most studies have examined behavior in the short term (e.g., over one week) and few studies have examined the effects of implementation intentions on other determinants of exercise behavior, such as self-efficacy (SE). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the effect of implementation intentions on exercise adherence and 3 different types of exercise SE.

Methods Women (N=72) from a Canadian university were recruited to participate in a 9-week exercise study. Participants were randomly assigned to an implementation intentions (IMP) condition or to a no IMP condition. Three types of exercise SE were assessed: task, coping and scheduling. In the IMP condition, participants also received written instructions at the end of the questionnaire to provide a specific plan regarding the number of sessions, days and times they planned to complete their exercise. Adherence was measured as the mean number of days per week participants performed their exercise program.

Results The effect of the implementation intentions on adherence was tested using Repeated Measures MANOVA. Results showed the experimental group had significantly better adherence ($F(4,08, p=0.047)$) overall. Also, adherence over time declined in both groups ($F(3,51, 186 \text{ Abstracts } p=0.036)$). Repeated measures MANOVA also showed the IMP group had higher scheduling SE ($F(4,82, p=0.034)$).

Conclusions Implementation intentions seem to be an effective way to increase adherence to an exercise program. Further, as expected, creating implementation intentions increases scheduling SE.