



Rugby Fans in Training – New Zealand (RuFIT-NZ)

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What is RuFIT-NZ?



A 12 week healthy lifestyles programme

- **targeted to overweight & inactive men.**
- **based within professional rugby clubs.**
- **comprising a weekly 2hr session with an interactive education and exercise training component delivered by a RuFIT coach.**
- **supplemented with a pedometer-based walking programme & personal lifestyle goals.**

Aim

- **To improve eating and drinking behaviours and increase physical activity as a means to achieve health improvement and weight loss.**

Rationale for RuFIT- NZ

- ▶ **Men's health is a significant issue for New Zealand (NZ Ministry of Health, 2016)**
 - ▶ 70.3% classed as overweight/obese.
 - ▶ More likely to have high blood pressure, ischaemic heart disease, stroke, Type II diabetes & less likely to visit GP.
 - ▶ More likely to drink alcohol & be hazardous drinkers, less likely to eat sufficient fruit & veg, 49% are inactive.
- ▶ **Importantly, men care about their health/weight but are described as 'hard to engage' (Morgan et al., 2011).**
- ▶ **Existing weight loss and healthy lifestyle programmes do not appeal because...**
 - ▶ they appear designed for, and are dominated by women.
 - ▶ focused on dieting.

RuFIT-NZ Concept Development

Key components of successful lifestyle programmes designed for men are (Robertson et al., 2014):

- ▶ a physical activity component & nutrition component.
- ▶ inclusion of key behaviour change strategies.
- ▶ ensuring it's individualised, fact-based, flexible and group-based.

The power of the professional sport club to attract, motivate and inspire men to take action.

- ▶ Capitalises on the traditional male sport context, fan's connection to 'their' team, provides men-only support.
- ▶ The Football Fans in Training (FFIT) programme has successfully supported 'at-risk' men to change their lifestyle behaviours and lose weight (Hunt et al., 2014).

Adapting the FFIT model to NZ

Development work explored feasibility issues around delivery and content.

- ▶ Interviews with relevant stakeholders.
- ▶ Focus groups with potential participants.
- ▶ Partnerships developed with Rugby Franchises, Heart Foundation, Pacific and Māori health providers.

Results informed the RuFIT-NZ programme content and procedures for delivery.

Pilot RCT Methods

- ▶ **96 overweight, inactive men (M age = 42 years) randomised into RuFIT intervention or wait-list control group.**
- ▶ **Delivered through Auckland Blues and Pulse Energy Highlanders in Dunedin.**
- ▶ **RuFIT group completed the 12 week programme.**
- ▶ **Compared weight, fitness, BP, self-report lifestyle behaviours at baseline and 12 weeks between groups.**
- ▶ **Programme feedback provided on completion.**

Pilot RCT Outcomes

- ▶ ~2.5kg ↓ in weight, 3.8%↓ in body fat
- ▶ 92% improvement in fitness
- ▶ ↑ fruit/veg & physical activity,
↓ alcohol consumption
- ▶ Overwhelming enthusiasm from participants
 - ▶ 100% would recommend to friends, helped 97% change behaviours.
- ▶ Key components for success:
Like-minded men, team atmosphere, trainer characteristics, knowledge development, rugby club involvement.

Conclusions

- ▶ **RuFIT-NZ appealed to men and successfully enabled them to make short-term lifestyle changes.**
- ▶ **Potential improvements include**
 - ▶ **more structured exercise 'homework'**
 - ▶ **strengthened goal setting component**
 - ▶ **help to maintain changes post RuFIT**
- ▶ **A definitive RCT is warranted to determine the full extent of RuFIT-NZ's effectiveness.**



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Happy to take questions