

## Looking AHEAD: Does Making Mid-Life Behavioral Changes Lead to Improved Health Later in Life?



**Dr. Mark Espeland,**  
Principal Investigator,  
Look AHEAD.

Look AHEAD (Action for Health in Diabetes) is a multi-center, randomized clinical trial examining the long-term effects of an intensive lifestyle intervention program in overweight and obese volunteers with type 2 diabetes. This program was designed to achieve and maintain weight loss by decreasing caloric intake and increasing physical activity.

According to Drs. Mark Espeland and Lynne Wagenknecht, primary investigators for the Look AHEAD coordinating center, the long-term effects of intensive behavioral interventions that promote weight loss and increased physical activity on many important health outcomes are not known. Look AHEAD will establish whether making lifestyle changes in mid-life improves the experience of adults with diabetes as they age.

The Division of Public Health Sciences at Wake Forest School of Medicine was chosen to coordinate the Look AHEAD study, based on its record as one of the premier teams in the US for managing complex studies, developing comprehensive data management and reporting systems, and analyzing and interpreting data.

The Look AHEAD trial began in 2001 and enrolled 5,145 participants in 16 centers across the US. So far, the study group has published more than 125 scientific articles involving over 275 researchers nationwide. These articles document the impact of the weight loss intervention on outcomes including cardiovascular disease, markers of bone health, diabetes control, health care costs, medication usage, sleep apnea, depression, kidney disease, physical function, mobility, cognitive function, and joint pain. Longer term goals are to examine whether the intervention reduces the risk of cognitive impairment including Alzheimer's disease, mobility disability, heart failure, mortality, hip fractures, later-life health care costs, and loss of independence and whether enrollment in an intensive lifestyle intervention is cost effective. The Look AHEAD study team was awarded the 2013 Wake Forest School of Medicine Faculty Research Team Science Award.



**Look AHEAD project management.**