

Abstract

The study was conducted to determine whether provision of oral supplementary iron to primary school children in Kenya would improve their growth. Children in the two lowest grades who satisfied study criteria were allocated to either an iron-supplementation group (n = 29) or a placebo group (n = 26). At the baseline before intervention the groups did not differ significantly in age, sex ratio, prevalence and intensity of intestinal helminthic infections, most anthropometric measurements or hemoglobin levels. Although the study lasted for 32 weeks, children only took iron or placebos on school days thus omitting weekends and school holidays. Examination at the end of the study showed that the iron-supplemented children had grown significantly more in terms of weight, weight for height, arm circumference and skinfold thickness compared with the placebo group. Hemoglobin levels had also improved significantly. We conclude that where iron deficiency anemia and undernutrition are prevalent in children, iron supplementation will improve growth and hemoglobin levels.