

Weight Loss

Finding a
Weight Loss Program
that Works for You



**Help for Choosing
Weight Loss Products or
Services from the
Partnership for Healthy
Weight Management**



Do you need to lose weight? If so, you're not alone. More than half of American adults are overweight or obese, and more than one in three Americans are trying to lose weight.

Perhaps you're planning to try one of the many available weight loss products or services, but aren't sure which one is right for you. It's easy to feel lost in the maze of choices out there – each promising the best results.

Now there's help in sorting through all these options. The Partnership for Healthy Weight Management encourages providers of weight loss programs to follow Voluntary Guidelines for Providers of Weight Loss Products or Services* to give you basic information about their methods.

The first part of this booklet describes the type of information participating programs provide and helps you ask the right questions to choose a safe and effective weight loss method. The second part helps you tell whether your weight puts you at risk for health problems.



* These Guidelines are for commercial weight loss products or services intended for adults. Overweight or obese children and adolescents have special needs, which the Partnership will address by developing special guidelines. The Guidelines are not intended to evaluate weight loss books, articles, Web sites or other publications.

Getting the Answers You Need

Looking for the Best Weight Loss Program: Getting the Answers You Need

Before you begin a weight loss program, see your primary health care provider for advice about your overall health risks and the weight loss options best for you. Health experts agree that the best and safest way for most adults to lose weight and improve their health is to modestly cut calories, eat a balanced diet and be physically active each day. Depending on your health and weight, your primary health care provider may recommend additional methods, such as medication or surgery, which carry greater risks. Consider all your choices seriously.

When you start shopping for a weight loss program, ask providers whether they follow the Voluntary Guidelines for Providers of Weight Loss Products or Services from the Partnership for Healthy Weight Management. If a

program provider doesn't know about the Guidelines, suggest they contact the Partnership at the Federal Trade Commission's address on page 5.

Participating programs will answer important questions about how their product or service works, how much it costs, how well it works and any risks involved in following the program.** On page 9, you'll find a detailed Checklist for Evaluating Weight Loss Products and Services. Copy this to use as a discussion guide when speaking with representatives from weight loss programs, whether or not they follow the Guidelines.



** If you become ill while using a weight loss product or service, immediately contact your primary health care provider. Then, file a report with the Food and Drug Administration by calling toll-free 1.800.332.1088.

Questions to Ask

Following are some questions to ask when evaluating a weight loss program. Programs that follow the Guidelines should answer these questions:

What's involved in following the program?

Ask for details about what foods and how many calories you'll eat each day, and whether the program includes regular physical activity. A weight loss program that claims you can lose weight and keep it off without changing the foods you eat or increasing your physical activity is selling a fantasy.

A sensible program encourages you to follow advice from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, such as eating at least five daily servings of fruits and vegetables, and choosing grains (including whole grains), lean meats and low-fat or fat-free dairy products.

People usually do best when they reduce their usual calorie intake or increase the calories they use by about

500-1000 calories per day. This allows you to eat enough for good nutrition and, if followed daily, helps you lose about 1 to 2 pounds a week. For diets under 1500 calories, be sure to check with your health care provider to make sure you meet all your nutrient needs. Including low-calorie snacks in your meal plan may help prevent you from becoming so hungry that you end up overeating or binging.

What are the staff qualifications?

If a program includes assistance from staff members, ask about their training, experience and credentials. Find out what type of attention you'll receive (for example, individual counseling or group support) and how often.



What are the risks of using the product or service?

Some methods for losing weight are riskier than others. Diets that require drastic food restriction should be under the supervision of a physician. Get details about side effects or risks that can occur from using the product or service. Check with your primary health care provider before you take prescription or over-the-counter weight loss drugs or dietary supplements. Mention any side effects you experience from drugs or other products that are part of the weight loss program. Steer clear of harmful “self help” weight loss tactics, such as smoking, fasting, purging, or abusing laxatives.

What are all the costs of this program?

Ask for an itemized price list that includes membership fees, fees for weekly visits, and costs for items such as diagnostic tests, food, meal replacements, dietary supplements, or other products in the program.

How can I improve my chances for keeping the weight off?

The Guidelines require participating programs to give you information about difficulties that many dieters experience with keeping weight off and how you can increase your odds for success.

How successful are other people who follow this program?

Ask whether the program can provide studies that document its success. If so, ask what percentage of all customers have completed the program, how much weight they lost, and how successfully they've kept the weight off over a one-year period or longer. Although the Guidelines do not require providers to disclose detailed program results, providers may give you some of this information. Remember, information based on only some of the people in the program probably reflects those most successful at meeting their weight loss and maintenance goals.

What If a Provider Claims to Follow the Guidelines, But Won't Answer My Questions?

No law requires providers of weight loss products or services to give you the information the Guidelines call for. However, a provider that claims to follow the Guidelines must give you all required information and it must be truthful and accurate.

If a provider claims to follow the Guidelines, but does not give you all required information, or if you suspect the information is not truthful or accurate, call the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) toll-free help line at 1.877.FTC.HELP, use the FTC's online complaint form at www.ftc.gov/ftc/complaint or contact the Partnership at the address below:

Federal Trade Commission
Bureau of Consumer Protection
600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20580
Attention: Partnership for Healthy Weight Management



Questions?



Being Overweight: A Risky Business

People choose to lose weight for many reasons – looking better and feeling more energetic are two popular reasons. Improving or keeping your health is the most important reason.

Being overweight, eating poorly, and being physically inactive all increase your risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and some forms of cancer. Other factors affecting your disease risk include your family and medical history, and lifestyle factors such as whether you smoke or drink too much alcohol.

If you are overweight, losing just five to 10 percent of your weight and keeping it off lowers your risk for developing most of these diseases. For example, an overweight 200-pound person who loses 10 to 20 pounds may reduce risk for disease and improve health problems, such as high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol. Adopting more healthful eating habits and daily physical activity can better your health, even if you don't lose weight. This section helps you rate whether your weight puts you at risk for health problems.

Rate Your Risk

The number you see on the scale doesn't necessarily tell you whether you need to lose weight. That's because two people of the same height and weight can have different bone structures and carry different amounts of muscle and body fat. For most adults, determining your Body Mass Index (BMI) and waist size are reliable ways to tell whether you are overweight and to estimate your risk for health problems.

Your BMI uses your height and weight to estimate how much fat is on your body. A BMI of at least 25 indicates overweight. A BMI of 30 or more indicates you are obese. Generally, the higher your BMI, the higher your weight risk.

Your waist size indicates whether you have an "apple" shape and tend to carry fat around your midsection. Your health risks increase even further with increasing waist size. A waist measurement greater than 40 inches for men or 35 inches for women indicates a significant increase in health risk.

To tell whether your weight is a health risk, locate your BMI in the "Find Your BMI" chart on the facing page. Then, measure your waist at the point below your ribcage but above your navel. Use your BMI and waist size to determine your risk using the Weighing Your Risk chart.

If your weight puts you at increased risk for health problems, talk with your primary health care provider about safe and suitable options for improving your health. Use the Checklist for Evaluating Weight Loss Products and Services on page 9 to gather information about different programs so you can choose the best one for you.



Find Your Body Mass Index (BMI)

Find your height in the left hand column. Then, move across the row to your weight. The number at the top of the column is your BMI.

BMI	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	35	40	45	50
Height	Weight in pounds															
58"	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	167	191	215	239
59	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	129	133	138	143	148	173	198	223	247
60	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	179	204	230	256
61	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	185	211	238	264
62	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	191	218	246	273
63	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	147	152	158	163	169	197	225	254	282
64	111	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	204	232	262	291
65	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	210	240	270	300
66	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	216	247	278	309
67	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	223	255	287	319
68	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	230	262	296	328
69	128	135	142	149	156	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	236	270	304	338
70	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	207	243	278	313	348
71	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	250	286	322	358
72	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	258	294	331	368
73	144	151	159	166	174	182	189	197	204	212	219	227	265	302	341	378
74	148	155	163	171	179	186	194	202	210	218	225	233	272	311	350	389
75	152	160	168	176	184	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	279	319	360	400
76	156	164	172	180	189	197	205	213	221	230	238	246	287	328	369	410

Adapted with permission from Bray, GA., Gray, D.S.
Obesity, Part 1, Pathogenesis, West J. Med. 1988: 149-41

Weighing Your Risk

Use this chart to see whether your weight puts you at increased risk for health problems. Find your BMI in the left-hand column. Then, locate your waist size in one of the top columns. The box where the two meet shows your level of risk.

Body Mass Index (BMI)		Waist less than or equal to 40 in. (men) or 35 in. (women)	Waist greater than 40 in. (men) or 35 in. (women)
18.5 or less	Underweight	—	N/A
18.5 - 24.9	Normal	—	N/A
25.0 - 29.9	Overweight	Increased	High
30.0 - 34.9	Obese	High	Very High
36.0 - 39.9	Obese	Very High	Very High
40 or greater	Extremely Obese	Extremely High	Extremely High

For More Information

For a copy of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, go to <http://www.odphp.osophs.dhhs.gov/pubs/dietguid/> or write:

ODPHP Communication
Support Center
P.O. Box 37366
Washington, DC 20013.7366
301.468.5960

Personal Health Profile Evaluation Checklist

Complete this profile
with your primary
health care provider
to help you choose
a weight loss program
that's best for you.

My weight in pounds is: _____

My height in inches is: _____

My BMI* is: _____

See the Find Your BMI chart on page 7.

My waist size in inches is: _____

My weight puts me at an ☐ increased ☐ high
☐ very high ☐ extremely high
risk for health problems.

Use the Weighing Your Risk chart on page 7 to calculate.

Information from my
primary health care provider:

My blood pressure is: _____

My blood cholesterol is: _____

My HDL cholesterol is: _____

My LDL cholesterol is: _____

My blood triglyceride level is: _____

My fasting blood sugar is: _____

* If your health care provider says these values are outside healthy ranges, you can improve them by losing and maintaining a moderate weight loss goal of five to 10 percent of your body weight, and increasing your physical activity level.

Checklist for Evaluating Weight Loss Products and Services

Use this checklist to gather
and compare information
from all weight loss programs
you're considering.

Make several copies of the blank form so you can fill out one for each program. A provider's willingness to give you this information is an important factor in choosing a program. If you need help to evaluate the information you gather, talk with your primary health care provider or a registered dietitian.

Program Name

Address

Phone Number

In this program, my daily caloric intake will be: _____

My daily caloric intake is determined by: _____

I ☐ will ☐ will not be evaluated initially by program staff.

The evaluation will be made by (check all that apply):

☐ Physician ☐ Nurse ☐ Registered Dietitian ☐ Other company-trained employee

My progress is supervised by (check all that apply):

☐ Physician ☐ Nurse ☐ Licensed Psychologist
☐ Registered Dietitian ☐ Company-trained employee

I ☐ will ☐ will not be evaluated by a physician during the course of my treatment.

During the first month, my progress will be monitored:

☐ Weekly ☐ Biweekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Other _____

After the first month, my progress will be monitored:

☐ Weekly ☐ Biweekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Other _____

My weight loss plan includes (check all that apply):

☐ Nutrition information about healthy eating	☐ At least 1,200 calories/day for women or 1,400 calories/day for men
☐ Suggested menus and recipes	☐ Keeping food diaries or other monitoring activities
☐ Portion control	☐ Liquid meal replacements
☐ Prepackaged meals	☐ Dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals, botanicals, herbals)
☐ Prescription weight loss drugs	☐ Help with weight maintenance and lifestyle changes
☐ Surgery	

Checklist for Evaluating Weight Loss Products and Services

continued

My plan includes regular physical activity that is (check both if both apply):

- ☐ Supervised (at the program site) _____ times per week, _____ minutes per session.
☐ Unsupervised (on my own time) _____ times per week, _____ minutes per session.

The physical activity includes (check all that apply):

- ☐ Walking ☐ Swimming ☐ Stationary cycling
☐ Strength training ☐ Aerobic dancing ☐ Other _____

The weight loss plan includes (check all that apply):

- ☐ Family counseling ☐ Group support ☐ Lifestyle modification advice
☐ Weight maintenance advice ☐ Weight maintenance counseling

☐ The staff explained the risks associated with this weight loss program. They are:

☐ The staff explained the costs of this program. (Check all that apply and fill in the blanks.)

- ☐ I will be charged a one-time entry fee of \$ _____.
☐ I will be charged \$ _____ per visit.
☐ Food replacements will cost about \$ _____ per month.
☐ Prescription weight loss drugs will cost about \$ _____ per month.
☐ Vitamins and other dietary supplements will cost about \$ _____ per month.
☐ Diagnostic tests are required and will cost about \$ _____.
☐ Other costs include _____ at \$ _____.

Total cost for this program \$ _____

The program gave me information about:

- ☐ The health risks of being overweight. ☐ The difficulty many people have maintaining weight loss.
☐ The health benefits of weight loss. ☐ How to improve my chances at maintaining my weight.

Other information to ask for:

- ☐ Participants in this program have lost an average of _____ lbs. over _____ months/years.
☐ Participants in this program have kept off _____ % of their weight loss for _____ year(s).

This information is based on the following (check one):

- ☐ All participants.
☐ Participants who completed the program.
☐ Other _____

Notes:
