

Effective Weight Loss Recommendations: Helping Your Patients Become Successful Losers

Diets Do Work

Who hasn't heard the statement "diets don't work"? But the National Weight Control Registry established in 1994 by Rena Wing, Ph.D. and James O. Hill, Ph.D. has been tracking over 5,000 adults who have been successful at maintaining an average weight loss of 66 pounds and have kept it off for 5.5 years. Weight loss ranges from 30 to 300 pounds. To join the registry, participants must have lost at least 30 pounds and kept it off for one year. Interestingly, 45% of those registered have lost weight on their own, while 55% were enrolled in weight loss programs.

What do successful losers have in common?

- 98% changed their food intake
- 94% increased physical activity, with 90% exercising about 1 hour/day
- 78% eat breakfast daily
- 75% weigh themselves at least once a week
- For weight maintenance, most continue to follow a low-calorie, lowfat meal plan and maintain their physical activity level.

More successful losers

The Look Ahead Clinical Trial (Action for Health in Diabetes) is a randomized, controlled, 16-center study funded by the National Institutes of Health targeting 5,145 overweight or obese people with type 2 diabetes, aged 45-74 years. The study began in 2001, and will end in 2012. It compares the effectiveness of an intensive lifestyle intervention (ILI) of reduced calories and increased physical activity to standard (usual care) diabetes education (DSE) on the reduction of cardiovascular disease events.

The Look Ahead Study provided a toolbox of strategies for weight loss geared to the individual. The physical activity goal was set at 175 minutes per week, and the weight loss goal was $\geq 7\%$ of initial weight. One of the meal planning approaches encouraged using meal replacements (MR) to initially replace 2 meals with a liquid shake, and a snack with a MR bar, while the evening meal consisted of conventional food in a 1200 or 1500 calorie meal plan. After the first six months, using MR for one meal and one snack a day was encouraged.

Several studies have demonstrated that MR promote weight loss, reduce plasma insulin levels and lipids and improve A1C. Additional MR benefits include being convenient—they allow busy people to limit portions, eat fewer calories at meals, and take them to work or school with little or no preparation needed.

Joslin Diabetes Center's Nutrition Guideline recognizes that meal replacements can be part of a successful weight management program.

http://www.joslin.org/Files/Nutrition_Guideline_Graded.pdf

One-year Look AHEAD Study results show the ILI achieved a mean weight loss of 8.6% from initial weight versus a 0.7% weight loss in the DSE group.

The four-year, weight-loss data was presented at the American Diabetes Association Scientific Sessions in June, 2009. Participants have experienced some weight regain, but have maintained a weight loss of 4.7% of their initial body weight.

What do successful weight-loss programs have in common?

- Meal planning
- Physical activity
- Behavior modification

One-year Look AHEAD Study results showed that participants who reported increased physical activity and use of MR and attended more education sessions achieved greater weight loss.

Is there a website that provides reliable weight loss information?

The Weight-Control Information Network (WIN) established in 1994 is a service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), National Institutes of Health (NIH). WIN provides information on obesity, weight control, physical activity and related nutritional issues for the public and health care professionals.

Successful weight loss can be accomplished and maintained over time with the added benefit of improvements in health.

Resources:

Wing RR, Phelan S. Long-term weight loss maintenance. *Am J Clin Nutr* 82(1):222S-225S, 2005.

National Weight Control Registry website: <http://www.nwcr.ws/>

Weight-control Information Network website: <http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov>

The Look AHEAD Research Group. The Look AHEAD Study: A Description of the Lifestyle Intervention and the Evidence Supporting It. *Obesity* 14(5):737-752, 2006.

Look AHEAD Study website: <http://www.lookaheadtrial.org>