



Dear *Walk Across Texas* Participant,

Included with this letter is the seventh topic of the Weight Management Series called “Weight Loss Programs.” The goal of this topic is to provide information for selecting weight loss programs.

To help you reach this goal, look for key points while reading “Weight Loss Programs.”

- One out of every three persons in America is obese.
- Ask about the qualification of weight loss professionals.
- Consider costs of the program.
- Beware of programs that pressure you to use their products.
- Beware of “natural” ingredients in weight loss products.
- Always check with your health care provider before starting any weight loss program especially if you have special medical needs.

Happy Walking!

Sincerely,

Weight Management Series — Health Break 7

Weight Loss Programs

Goal:

To provide information for selecting weight loss programs

Objective:

Participants will:

- Decide if they would like to participate in a commercial weight loss program.

Key Teaching Points:

- One out of every three persons in America is obese.
- Ask about the qualifications of weight loss professionals.
- Consider costs of the programs.
- Beware of programs that pressure you to use their products.
- Beware of “natural” ingredients in weight loss products.
- Always check with your health care provider before starting any weight loss program especially if you have special medical needs.

Activity:

- Have participants complete *Program Selection Work Sheet*. Discuss their answers and allow them time to state any concerns they would have in attending a weight loss program. The decision to participate in a commercial weight loss program should be their personal choice. Try not to influence them in any way.

Evaluation

- Yes No 1. Obesity is a major problem in America.
- Yes No 2. Most commercial weight loss programs offer structure and support.
- Yes No 3. Avoid programs that pressure you into using their products.
- Yes No 4. “Natural” products are safe for everyone to use.
- Yes No 5. It is important to choose a program that you feel comfortable with.

Answers: 1. Yes; 2. Yes; 3. Yes; 4. No; 5. Yes

Weight Loss Programs

It is estimated that one in three persons in the United States is obese. Obesity and the illnesses that go with it carry a \$100 billion annual price tag. Some of the people who recognize the problems and the cost of being overweight decide to use the help of weight loss programs to achieve a healthy weight. A survey of women who lost 30 pounds or more and kept the weight off for an average of 5.5 years showed that 60% of these women sought the help of a formal program or professional guidance such as a registered dietician for help. Always ask about the qualifications of weight loss professionals; if they have no recognizable degree or license, you might want to look elsewhere for help.

Many weight loss programs are available. These programs offer structure and support for weight loss. Should you decide to enlist the help of a weight loss program, attend meetings of different groups to help you decide which program is right for you. As always, remember to talk with your health care provider before starting any weight loss program especially if you have special medical needs.

Avoid programs that pressure you to buy their own brand of weight loss herbs, vitamins, or other weight loss products. Substances containing ephedrine, often listed as Ma Huang, could be dangerous especially if taken with a number of other drugs, including some over-the-counter drugs, or if you have high blood pressure. Most ephedrine containing products claim safety because their products are “natural.” However, natural does not equal safe. Ask your physician before taking any product containing ephedrine.

Weight Watchers, TOPS, Overeaters Anonymous, and Jenny Craig are just a few types of weight loss programs. We are going to highlight these programs so you will have an idea of what weight loss programs may offer.

The four programs were chosen at random. Commercial products and trade names are given here for information only; they are intended as examples. Texas Cooperative Extension does not endorse or guarantee any commercial product or service and does not recommend one product instead of others that might be similar.

Weight Watchers

Weight Watchers uses an educational program and group support to encourage healthy habits. The Weight Watchers program is designed to promote a healthful rate of weight loss by encouraging healthy nutrition, behavior changes, and physical activity. While you may choose to purchase Weight Watchers products in the grocery store, learning to make your own foods is emphasized. The program is developed by health professionals. Meeting leaders are not health professionals but rather former members who successfully lost weight; they must maintain their weight loss to continue being a leader.

Weight Watchers is a membership program. A membership fee is paid on the first visit. A set fee is charged for every meeting thereafter. If you miss a meeting, expect to be charged for the missed meeting when you attend the next week. You will receive as part of your membership the following:

- Assistance in determining a weight goal that is appropriate for you.
- One copy of the Weight Watchers program materials each week.
- A weekly private weigh-in followed by an educational program.
- Awards that recognize your weight-loss achievements.

TOPS

TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) is a non-profit weight loss support group. TOPS provides information, motivation, and fellowship in reaching and maintaining weight goals. TOPS has a yearly membership fee. Features of the program are:

- A weekly private weigh-in followed by a program of positive reinforcement.
- Electing volunteer leaders from chapter membership.
- A system of competition and recognition to provide additional support.
- A TOPS sponsored book containing the exchange system for meal planning as well as practical advice on nutrition.
- TOPS retreats, rallies, and recognition days.
- TOPS NEWS — a monthly membership magazine included in TOPS' annual membership fee.

Overeaters Anonymous

Overeaters Anonymous (OA) is a program based on the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. The 12-step program offers help for the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of overeating. OA is not a professional diet club and does not endorse specific food plans or diets. The 12 steps are:

1. We admitted we were powerless over food — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Jenny Craig Weight Management Program

The Jenny Craig Weight Management Program emphasizes safety and long-term weight management. You learn to manage your weight by focusing on proper nutrition, exercise, and behavior change. Membership is free, but you must purchase the Jenny Craig Cuisine.

Menus are planned using the Jenny Craig Cuisine, fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products. You are encouraged to drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water every day. When you are half way to your weight goal, you are shown how to plan your own meals for two days a week using a modified exchange system. When you reach your weight goal, you are shown how to gradually make the change to seven days of self-planned menus.

Like Weight Watchers, the program is developed by health professionals, but individual weekly meetings are with Jenny Craig staff who are not health professionals. They provide support as well as help to personalize the program by offering strategies and information.

To help you maintain your weight, the Lifestyle Maintenance Program includes 12 Guidebooks which address issues such as dealing with a new body size, and maintaining the motivation for physical activity.

Everyone is different. If you decide to join a weight loss program, pick a program that you feel is right for you. Complete the Program Selection Work Sheet to help you make a selection.

Program Selection Work Sheet

Name of program being considered: _____

Convenience:

- _____ Is this program easy for me to attend on a regular basis?
- _____ Do I have the necessary transportation?

Cost:

- _____ How much does it cost?
- _____ Do I have the financial resources for this program or service?

Time:

- _____ Do I have the time to meet the requirements of this program like attending meetings, appointments, preparing food, exercise, etc.?

Other Considerations:

- _____ What is the dropout rate?
- _____ What percentage of people successfully complete the program?
- _____ Does the program offer dietary balance, including servings for ALL food groups?
- _____ Does the program include diet, physical activity, and lifestyle change components?
- _____ What are the credentials of the service providers?
- _____ Does the program provide ongoing support for weight maintenance?
- _____ What percentage of people maintain the weight they have lost?