

Featured Merchant

Weight Loss FOR THE Long Term

by Judy Chang Cody



As Executive Director of Fitness and Wellness at the Health & Wellness Center by Doylestown Hospital, Pat Vida has heard these frustrations and more in her conversations with people who come in to tour the state-of-the-art facility in Warrington. Wisdom and experience have taught her, however, that there is no simple answer for everyone. “Different people come from different places in their desire to achieve and maintain a healthy weight,” she says. “Some people may be interested in just exercise at the moment, while others ask about weight-management programs with a strong nutritional component. Still others might just want to attend some of our presentations or talk to a Health Design nurse. We try to meet them where they are, so to speak, and make them feel welcome and comfortable in what we believe is a very user-friendly facility.”

It’s that time of year again! Holiday parties, family feasts, office treats ... lots and lots and lots to eat. For many of us, the joy of the season is tempered by a daily struggle with temptation and the knowledge that we will once again add pounds to an already overburdened frame. Pounds that will stubbornly stick around after the new year, causing a measure of self-directed anger and a whole lot of frustration that we’re getting really sick of living with.

And speaking of sick.... Yes, we know that excess weight is not good for our health. We know that carrying around extra pounds saps our energy and limits our mobility. We don’t need to be told, “You really should lose some weight.” We know. We might even know how to drop a few pounds, at least temporarily. What we don’t know is how to keep the weight off, feel better, and face the holiday season - or any season - with confidence.

Weight by Design Statistics

Average changes*

Pounds	- 18.4 pounds
% Body weight	- 8%
Waistline	- 2.7 inches
Systolic BP (top number)	- 7.1 mmHg
Diastolic BP (bottom number)	- 3.7 mmHg
Total cholesterol	- 8.5 mg/dl
LDL cholesterol	- 6.6 mg/dl
Triglycerides	- 18.5 mg/dl

*Number of participants with data for analysis ranged from 126 to 320. Number of participants completing the program as of 10/3/05 is 323.

SUCCESS IS MORE THAN THE NUMBER ON THE SCALE

One of the most popular programs at the Health & Wellness Center for people looking to lose weight is Weight by Design, a 17-week program that takes a medical approach to weight management. Based on the LEARN Weight Management Program designed at Yale University by Dr. Kelly Brownell, Weight by Design is led by a Health Design nurse or dietitian who provides education and strategies for long-term success. And for the first time in the experience of many participants, “success” is defined in a new way.

“The program is about more than losing weight,” explains Stephanie Weisser, RN, a nurse with the Health Design Center and a leader of the program. “It’s about decreasing risk for heart disease, diabetes, cancer, arthritis, and a wide range of other health issues. That’s why we do a private, comprehensive assessment of each participant at the first group session and at the end of the 17 weeks to measure success.” The assessment includes blood pressure, pulse, and lab work – a lipid panel (to measure cholesterol and triglycerides) and a fasting blood sugar test. “We use this information to provide our clients with a coronary risk profile to assess their cardiac risk,” explains Stephanie. Waist circumference plus height, weight, and level of physical activity are also recorded.

GROUP SUPPORT KEEPS MOTIVATION HIGH

Once sessions begin, the dynamics of the group – usually limited to about 12 participants – plays a major role in keeping motivation high. “The group becomes very close,” says Stephanie, “with members being very respectful and supportive of each other. A mini-support network seems to develop, and participants feel a responsibility to each other to stay on track.”

Support from Fitness Center staff also fosters success. At week 6 or 7, a trainer attends a session to provide general information about exercise and weight loss as well as practical ideas for activities to do at home.

To be sure, successful weight management extends far beyond 17 weeks. It’s a lifetime commitment with a lifetime of benefits. “People in the program learn to make changes in nutrition, exercise, and behavior that they can maintain throughout their lives,” says Stephanie. “That’s because what they learn is realistic and it works.” Program statistics confirm this. Participants lose an average of almost 8 percent of their body weight and make significant improvements in their overall health (see ‘Weight by Design Statistics’). In fact, many Weight by Design participants have been able to reduce their blood pressure and medications as a direct result of the

“NO ONE IS POINTING A FINGER...”

Once you meet Nancy Compton, you never forget her. Outgoing and upbeat, her positive attitude infuses every conversation and encounter. She’s also very direct about the many years she’s struggled with her weight. “I’ve tried just about every diet plan, program, or group out there,” she says. “You name it, I’ve tried it. And sometimes I did lose weight, but I always wound up putting it back on again. Nothing I tried ever made the transition, over the long-term, to the real-world, everyday life I live.”

That changed when Nancy decided to give Weight by Design a try. “At the very first session I thought ‘This is different,’” she recalls. “No one is pointing a finger. We all understand how difficult it is to lose weight and do it sensibly. I never hear a negative word from anyone, in our group or anywhere else in the Health & Wellness Center, and that makes it a very welcoming place to be.”

Nancy is very pleased with the weight she’s lost so far, and especially pleased with the increased energy she has for enjoying visiting grandchildren and ‘granddogs.’ She’s also made friends in her tight-knit Weight by Design group ... friends who have become supportive work-out buddies and like-minded grocery shopping companions. “I’m losing weight and I also feel good,” says Nancy. “For me, Weight by Design has put all the pieces together and made sensible, long-term weight management a practical reality. That’s made all the difference.”



Successful weight management is a lifetime commitment with lifelong benefits.

Top Tips for Not Gaining Weight During the Holidays

1. Continue to get at least some exercise. Cutting back is okay during this busy time, but don't stop altogether.
2. Get plenty of sleep. Your resolve will be stronger when you're well rested.
3. Before a party, have an eating and drinking plan.
 - Use moderation when drinking alcohol. For example, drink nonalcoholic beverages (or water) if you need to quench your thirst. Water down your drinks (spritzers). Remember, alcohol lowers inhibitions and your resolve.
 - Search out healthier food choices first (and food you can identify).
 - Remember that this is not your last meal.
 - Put all the food on your plate at one time, then move away from the table.
4. Weigh yourself daily. Catch the small gains before they become a big problem.

program. And they finally learn to get off the dieting yo-yo and make successful weight management truly a part of their lives.

KEEP ON KEEPIN' ON

"...Truly a part of your life." That is perhaps the single most important message for people who want to manage their weight successfully for the long term. And it's a message that's embraced by participants of another popular program at the Health & Wellness Center, The Healthy Path. Designed for people who have completed a weight loss program but are not yet at goal weight, The Healthy Path combines nutrition education and behavior modification with a Health Design nurse and workouts with a Fitness Center trainer. Open to all interested individuals, it's a great way to keep on the path to better health.

When Stephanie Weisser sums up the essence of successful weight management, she uses only positive words. "Eat well. Eat right. Be healthier. Feel better. Do more. Live a better life." That says it all.

For information about any of the weight management programs offered by the Health Design Center, call 215-918-5995.

Just for Teens

The Just for Teens! Weight Loss Program is a fun, action-packed 8-week program where teens can learn how to make healthy food choices, develop an exercise program, and deal with social pressures to eat. "It's been a very successful program," says Pat Vida. The small group environment helps keep teens motivated, and the Health Design nurse and Fitness Center trainer who lead the group provide compassionate and competent guidance for positive results.



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