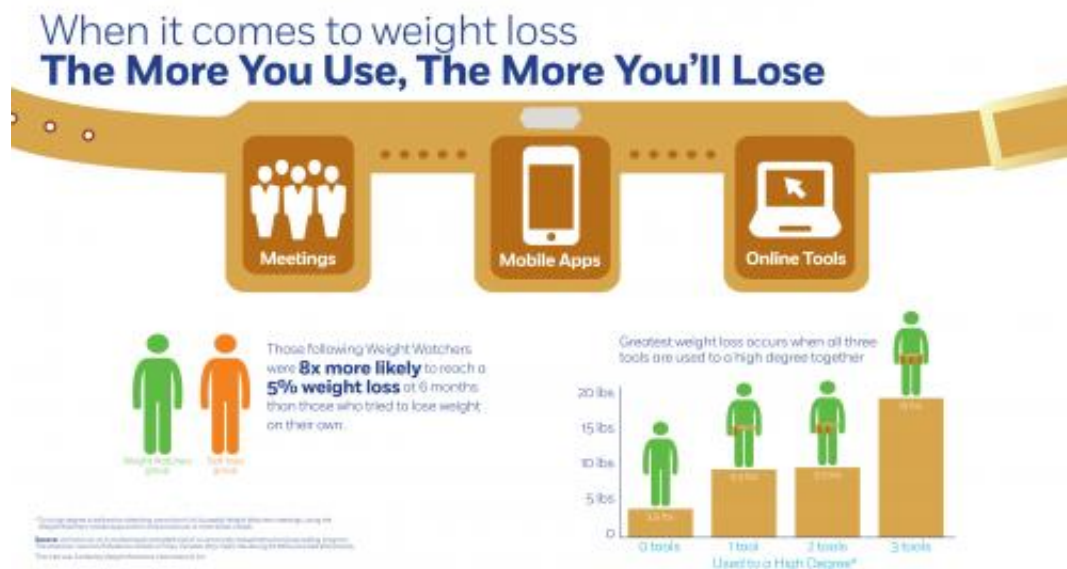


Study finds community-based weight loss intervention yields greater weight loss than self-help approach

October 15 2013



"This clinical trial demonstrates that when Weight Watchers meetings, mobile applications and online tools are used in combination, the greatest weight loss is achieved," explains lead investigator Craig Johnston, Ph.D., an assistant professor at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Credit: Weight Watchers International, Inc.

A new randomized controlled trial conducted by Baylor College of Medicine researchers and published today as an Article in Press in *The American Journal of Medicine* finds that overweight and obese adults following a community-based weight loss intervention, namely Weight

Watchers, lost significantly more weight than those who tried to lose weight on their own (10.1 lbs. vs. 1.3 lbs. at six months). Those in the Weight Watchers group were provided with three access routes – group meetings, mobile applications, and online tools – and further analysis found those who used all three access routes together lost the most weight.

Of the 292 overweight and [obese adults](#) who participated in the six-month trial, those assigned to the Weight Watchers group were eight times more likely to achieve at least a five percent [weight loss](#) than those assigned to lose weight on their own. The five percent weight loss threshold is important because, according to the CDC, it is the amount associated with improved health markers, such as cardiovascular risk factors and blood sugar levels.

While there are more than 80 peer reviewed publications that establish the efficacy of the Weight Watchers community-based approach, this is the first study that included the three complementary ways to access the program – meetings, [mobile applications](#) and [online tools](#) – in the study design.

Among the 147 participants assigned to the Weight Watchers group, those using all three access routes to a high degree (defined as more than 50 percent of the weekly meetings and using the mobile applications and/or online tools two or more times a week) had the greatest weight loss at 19 lbs. Those using two access routes to a high degree lost 9.5 lbs. and those using one lost 9.3 lbs. Meeting attendance was the strongest predictor of weight loss compared to usage of the other access routes.

"This clinical trial demonstrates that when Weight Watchers meetings, mobile applications and online tools are used in combination, the greatest weight loss is achieved," explains lead investigator Craig Johnston, Ph.D., an Assistant Professor at Baylor College of Medicine in

Houston.

"This study would suggest that those who piece together a weight loss program for themselves by using things such as internet-based information, cheap or free mobile apps, and social media support are unlikely to have the same success as those following the Weight Watchers approach," said Karen Miller-Kovach, MS, RD, Co-Chief Scientific Officer at Weight Watchers International, Inc. and a co-author of the study. "We believe that multiple access routes to engage with a proven weight-loss approach make a measurable difference."

With almost 70 percent of American adults classified as overweight or obese, according to the National Institutes of Health, there is a need to provide practical treatment solutions that are effective, accessible, and affordable. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) guidelines state that primary care physicians and other clinicians should offer or refer obese adult patients for intensive, multi-component behavioral intervention, known as Intensive Behavioral Therapy (IBT) under the Affordable Care Act.

"With the obesity epidemic we are facing as a nation, it's imperative that [primary care physicians](#) and other providers follow the requirements of the Affordable Care Act by screening their patients for obesity and providing or referring those who are obese with intensive behavioral interventions," said John P. Foreyt, Ph.D., Professor and Director of the Behavioral Medicine Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine and a co-author of the study. "Despite this USPSTF guidance, most Americans try to lose weight on their own rather than choosing scientifically proven approaches."

"As the nation's largest provider of intensive behavioral therapy, Weight Watchers can provide proven, effective, affordable and convenient treatment to tackle this public health challenge," said Miller-Kovach,

Weight Watchers International.

More information: Johnston et al. A randomized controlled trial of a community-based behavioral counseling program. *American Journal of Medicine*. Article in Press, October 2013.

[dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.amjmed.2013.04.025](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjmed.2013.04.025)

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

Citation: Study finds community-based weight loss intervention yields greater weight loss than self-help approach (2013, October 15) retrieved 8 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-10-community-based-weight-loss-intervention-yields.html>

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