

Losing weight the online way

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(HealthDay)—Not being able to attend face-to-face meetings doesn't mean you can't get the benefits of joining an organized diet group. All you need is an internet connection.

Online diet programs let you sign in for information and motivation at any hour of the day or night.

Participating in a web-based weight-loss program can be helpful in many ways—not just with weight loss, but also with weight-loss maintenance and improving lifestyle habits that might have led to your [weight gain](#).

There are many types of online programs, some from the same companies that offer in-person sessions, and others from successful diet doctors, for instance. So it makes sense to compare choices, especially those with a monthly fee.

Basic offerings tend to include diet information and planning, and goal setting—such as losing inches as well as pounds, and even lowering blood pressure and other [cardiovascular disease risk](#) factors. You can often add on bells and whistles like feedback from a [diet](#) professional, which may lead to greater success, especially if you've lacked motivation in the past.

Some helpful features of online programs include:

- Personalized calorie counts to lose 1 to 2 pounds a week.
- Food and exercise diaries.
- Calorie calculators.
- Menu plans with a grocery list.
- Options for special dietary needs.
- Physical activity plans tailored to your interests.
- Weekly tips and tricks for motivation and weight loss.
- Forums or chats for support.
- Graphs to chart your progress.

Keep in mind that you'll still need to make the effort to log in, monitor and chart your weight, and keep track of [calorie intake](#) and exercise

expenditure. But you'll be able to do this on your schedule and whenever you need a boost of motivation.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases has detailed information on [choosing a diet program](#) with criteria for both online and in-person programs.

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