

Study finds financial rewards lead to greater weight loss

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With two in three Australian adults currently overweight or obese, and around 47% of Australians now living with related chronic health conditions, an updated report from Australia's national science agency,

CSIRO, has reinforced that personal accountability coupled with financial rewards continue to be a key motivator for achieving weight loss.

The recent analysis of over 48,000 CSIRO Total Wellbeing Diet members, more than triple the sample size from the original study in 2018, found that those who successfully claimed the financial incentive offered by the program, achieved 28% greater [weight loss](#) than those members who didn't claim the financial incentive.

Financial reward claimants lost an average of 6.2kg (or 6.7% of their starting body weight), in comparison to the 4.8kg (or 5.2% of starting body weight) lost by those who didn't claim the financial reward.

CSIRO Research Scientist and report author Dr. Gilly Hendrie said the research was telling evidence of how taking personal accountability by engaging in self-monitoring behaviors promoted healthy weight loss.

"It is encouraging to see the results of our study support other psychology and behavioral change research that self-accountability and financial incentives can have a meaningful impact on people's weight loss success," Dr. Hendrie said.

"Breaking unhealthy habits that have developed over a long time can be hard and it is easy to lose motivation if you are not seeing immediate results on the scales.

"We've found self-accountability activities like tracking your weight and taking progress photos can be positive for members to see the physical changes from one week to the next; it can give them the drive to stay on track and continue to form the healthy habits which will help them achieve their health goals," she said.

The analysis also found that two-thirds of members who claimed the refund reward lost a clinically relevant amount of weight, more than 5% of their starting body weight, compared to half of the non-rewarded members.

"A 5% reduction in [body weight](#) is proven to markedly lower the risk for type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease and improve metabolic function in obese and overweight people," Dr. Hendrie said.

CSIRO Total Wellbeing Dietitian Pennie McCoy said since the financial incentive's launch in 2015, the CSIRO Total Wellbeing Diet had given Australians \$2.2 million in refund rewards, as well as improving their health.

"With the number of CSIRO Total Wellbeing members claiming the refund reward increasing to nearly one-third over the past two years it is telling that Australians are not only prioritizing their health but looking for weight loss programs that are also good for their wallets," McCoy said.

Brian Thomas from Queensland believes the refund reward was key to his 27 kg weight loss.

"The refund reward was not only a key motivator to me signing up, but it helped me achieve my weight loss goals and regain my health because it sets up the framework to do things you need to do to be successful," Thomas said.

"If I didn't have to track my food for the refund reward, maybe I would never have got into the habit of tracking. Even now, three months after I received my refund, I'm still keeping up those behaviors. It's allowed me to make positive changes to my own life and habits, and it has had a positive impact on my family. Best of all it didn't cost me a cent."

The CSIRO Total Wellbeing Diet offers a financial reward equal to the cost of the program (\$199) for people who complete the 12-week program and follow the science-based criteria to make behavioral changes which support long-term weight loss. The criteria include weekly weigh-ins, uploading a photo to track progress, and using a food diary at least three times per week.

Provided by CSIRO

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