

Coloradans can make money by losing weight

December 28 2011, By P. SOLOMON BANDA , Associated Press

(AP) -- Insurance company Kaiser Permanente Colorado is offering cash to Coloradans to lose weight and keep it off.

Companies have been making similar offers to their employees for years as a way to reduce obesity in the workplace and lower [health costs](#), but Kaiser is taking it one step further and making the offer to any adult in Colorado.

It's one of the first programs in the nation to make such an offer to all adults.

Participants in the "Weigh and Win" program earn anywhere from \$15 to \$150 every three months to lose weight and keep it off.

Twelve kiosks with scales and a video camera to record progress are located in [medical facilities](#), recreation centers, libraries and even a furniture store throughout the state.

The insurer is spending \$500,000 to help jump start the program, which it hopes will eventually be funded by the cities and other health care groups that it's working with.

Kaiser hopes to expand Weigh and Win by adding 10 kiosks next year as part of its community outreach programs.

"Weight loss is as effective as [mammograms](#), or [colon cancer](#) screenings or [blood pressure control](#) when you speak about the amount of dollars

you spend for the life years you gain from the program," said Dr. Eric France, who's in charge of developing the program at the insurer.

"And from the medical perspective, losing about 5 percent body weight is considered valuable and helpful," said France, Kaiser's chief of population care and prevention services.

About 8,900 Coloradans have signed up since the program began in April. The average weight loss has been about 12 pounds.

Tanya Amaro, a pediatrics [nurse practitioner](#) at Denver Health Medical Center, checks in every week at the kiosk in the hospital's cafeteria. She began her quest to lose weight last November, losing about 27 pounds on her own, and found that she couldn't lose any more. She has lost an additional 37 pounds through the program, earning her \$75 since May.

"It's pretty cool," she said.

She found the grocery store shopping lists; recipes for low-fat, healthy meals; and a workout regime from a personal trainer assigned to her through the program helpful in breaking through the plateau she had reached.

"Not just that I need to walk or I need to run. I knew that stuff, you know, that's commonsense stuff," she said. "It actually tells you how to do it, when to do it. You get text messages on your phone."

France said it's difficult to put a dollar amount on the benefits the program may bring.

"It's not really a medical solution to obesity problems, the obesity epidemic," France said. "It has to be a community solution. It's about access to good food, it's access to places to exercise, places to ride your

bicycle, use transit, policies at school, policies at work and opportunities to have supportive programs to help you [lose weight](#)."

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