

Weight Watcher Program Review

The decision to lose weight is not one that many people make lightly - excuse the pun. Often, it has been flitting around in the mind for years. It may even have been reached, acted on and abandoned as another fad diet bit the dust. Then, a rogue photograph appears depicting you doing your best whale impression, or you are unexpectedly required to move quickly (perhaps during a fire drill at work, where everyone sees you panting), and almost expire from the effort. Shamed into action you decide once again that another attempt to shed weight will be worthwhile. The good news is that you needn't do it on your own. A huge range of weight-loss programs exist today - from independent, locally run clubs to the multi-national organizations - all offering weight-loss plans to suit individual needs and budgets. Arguably, one of the most successful of the large organizations is WeightWatchers. Founded in a New York apartment over 40 years ago by Jane Nedetch, the small support group for friends has grown into the vastly successful international company that it is today. By combining a program of healthy eating and exercise with group support, WeightWatchers developed a 'partnership' approach to dieting which has since been emulated by many other weight-loss organizations world wide. How does WeightWatchers operate? Membership: After locating a local meeting venue via the internet or the local press, members can join the organization for a fee of around \$25-\$30. This membership fee is often waived during special promotion months, which are generally advertised in the media. A weekly fee of around \$10-\$15 is paid at each meeting, although monthly and three-monthly packages can be bought in advance at a discounted rate. Membership lapses if a member fails to attend meetings for four weeks. Members must pay for a missed meeting but if they have missed more than two, they need only pay for the first week missed and for the current week. Each member is allowed to miss two meetings in the course of the year without having to pay. When a member has reached an agreed 'goal' weight and maintained it (within two lbs or one kilo) for six weeks, he or she becomes a Life member and may attend future meetings free of charge, provided the goal weight is maintained and at least one meeting is attended each month. Online membership is now available for those who cannot attend meetings or who live in a rural area. A monthly online membership costs around \$44. The Points System: The dietary part of the WeightWatchers program works on a 'points' system. Every food is allocated a point value according to its fat and sugar content. For example, an apple may be valued at one point, while a sausage may be valued at five. Most vegetables and salad ingredients are 'free' and can be eaten without penalty. Members are given a daily point allocation of around 18-22 points, depending on their current weight. No food is forbidden, as long as the point value is factored into the daily point consumption. Points may be saved for later in a week to allow members to eat out. Various exercises are also given a point value. Bonus points gained by being active, allow the member to save for later in the week, or may be spent on an extra treat to the value of the bonus on that day. There are ceilings on the number of points which can be saved or earned in any one week to prevent binge eating, starving and excessive exercising. All members receive a points-value guide to the basic foods in Week One of the program. The Meetings: On joining WeightWatchers, the member's height and current weight are recorded in the 'passport' document, which holds each member's personal details for the duration of the program. The member retains the passport and only has to produce it when being weighed. A general goal weight is then set in consultation with the group leader, based on healthy weight to height ratios. A more specific goal can be set later when the member's weight lies within this ratio. The member receives the Week One support materials which included a weekly brochure containing a tracker (for recording food intake, exercise and points) a possible weekly menu, some words on the topic of the week and a Quickstart DVD (a support DVD to be used during the first six weeks of the program). The member then attends the weekly meeting during which the leader delivers a talk on the week's topic and members are invited to share their experiences, questions and advice. Why is WeightWatchers so popular? Many devotees of the organization will answer this in just one word: Flexibility. The weight-loss plan which runs for 24 weeks can be tailored to meet a wide range of needs. The points system allows for total flexibility of menu. No food is forbidden or compulsory and the menus if used are written with busy lifestyles in mind. Meetings are also flexible; with members being able to attend meetings at other venues should they find themselves unable to get to their usual meeting. Members are also free to choose the level of their involvement at these meetings. While some need the group support each week, many people opt to just 'weigh-in' then leave. Either is acceptable. In addition, WeightWatchers offers a wide range of support materials: a points value guide to specific brands of foods, a Supermarket guide, the Eating-Out guide, a monthly WeightWatchers' magazine, WeightWatchers' own food products, cookbooks and scales. Like any weight-loss program, the WeightWatchers system does have some drawbacks. As it is run at a local level by leaders who have previously lost weight on the program, and current members who volunteer, the effectiveness of the support group is dependent on individual personalities. If a new member has trouble fitting in with the existing group, he or she may choose not to return. Some people may also argue that the points' system approach to weight control is a short term method and just one of many weight-loss options, although none of these other options are promoted to members. Finally, for many people the weekly fee is too expensive, especially if the member does not like to attend the meetings. It does seem extravagant to spend \$15 each week just to step on a pair of scales. Regardless of these criticisms, people are still flocking to join WeightWatchers and many similar weight-loss organizations across the globe. In today's world, weight-loss needs to be less about vanity and more about health and well being, with all the benefits of looking good 'thrown in'. Weight Watchers offers a practical, accessible and structured way forward to a fit, healthy lifestyle. You may interested in these reviews:

About the Author

As the elasticity and health of connective tissue declines, Peak Stride help your dog regain increased movement, mobility and quality.