DAILY MAIL (London)

November 4, 2011 Friday

**LOSE JUST 7LB AND YOU COULD ADD A YEAR TO YOUR LIFE**  
**LENGTH:** 506 words

... BUT ONLY IF YOU'RE MIDDLE-AGED AND OVERWEIGHT

BY JENNY HOPE MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

OVERWEIGHT people who lose just seven pounds in weight could gain an extra year of life, a study has found.

However, to extend your time on Earth by 12 months, researchers warn that 'you have to sustain the weight loss for ever'.

The study also suggests that Weight Watchers and other commercial weight-loss programmes are better than GPs at helping obese patients shed the pounds.

The benefits include cutting the risk of diabetes and boosting life expectancy, says the research from Birmingham University.

A study of 740 British slimmers found that those who went to a commercial slimming group for three months lost twice as much weight as those who were given diet advice by their family doctor.

The average weight loss was best for those attending Weight Watchers sessions Ð who lost almost ten pounds (4.4kg) on average Ð and worst for those following GP advice, who lost around three pounds (1.4kg).

Nevertheless, overweight middle-aged people who lose around seven pounds and maintain their new weight would gain a year of life, said Dr Kate Jolly, senior lecturer in public health and epidemiology at Birmingham University.

She said patients seem to lose weight more successfully when their GPs send them to commercial sessions, paid for by the NHS, including Weight Watchers, Slimming World and Rosemary Conley.

They were also significantly cheaper, with a course of 12 one-hour group sessions costing around £55 Ð just slightly more than one 12-minute GP appointment.

Dr Jolly said the NHS-funded study analysed the effect on life expectancy of weight loss of around seven pounds (3.5kg) in a 14-stone 49-year-old Ð the average age of people taking part in the study.

She added: 'It shows that losing a fairly modest amount of weight is worthwhile, although the big challenge is maintaining the weight loss.

Many studies show that people tend to put it on again after a short period of time.'

Almost a third of people allocated to the Weight Watchers group achieved a 5 per cent drop in body weight Ð the level needed to cut the risk of developing diabetes.

In the study, published in the British Medical Journal, the obese and overweight participants were asked by their GPs to join several commercial weight loss programmes, or have counselling from GPs or pharmacists over 12 weeks.

Another group was given free vouchers for a local fitness centre.After one year, all those attending commercial sessions had lost significant amounts of weight, while counselling made little difference.

Attendance seemed to be the key factor, with people going more often to commercial sessions.

Dr Jolly said: 'GPs don't have the tools for helping patients lose weight consistently, but they were the reason these patients were nudged towards losing weight in the first place.'

Almost a quarter of adults in England are now classified as obese and around two-thirds of Primary Care Trusts in England and Wales already pay for patients to attend Weight Watchers courses.

Metro (UK)

November 4, 2011 Friday   
Edition 1;   
National Edition

**Join a club if you want to get thin**  
**BYLINE:** Joel Taylor  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 13  
  
**LENGTH:** 278 words

IF YOU want to lose weight, the best way is to join a commercial diet programme.

Dieters who sign up to schemes run by Weight Watchers, Slimming World, Rosemary Conley and the like lose more weight, more effectively than similar plans offered by GPs.

People on 'private' programmes lost an average of 2.3kg (5lb) more than those in NHS schemes, a study by the University of Birmingham found.

It focused on 740 obese or overweight people in the city who were divided into six groups.

All the schemes achieved weight loss at 12 weeks - from an average of 1.37kg (3lb) in the GP group to 4.43kg (10lb) in the Weight Watchers group.

At the one-year mark, all the programmes, except the GP group and one other, had resulted in 'signifi-cant weight loss'.

The GP group was found to be no better than the control group - where people exercised at a local fitness centre.

It appears that gentle peer pressure and mutual support motivates people more strongly than a doctor's advice.

People were also least likely to attend GP practice sessions.

The study concluded: 'Commercially provided weight management services are more effective and cheaper than primary care-based services led by specially trained staff, which are ineffective.'

A Department of Health spokesman said: 'Weight management programmes can be very cost-effective and make losing weight easier for some people, but the best way to lose weight will be different for everyone.'

Dr Jacquie Lavin, from Slimming World, said: 'If responsibility for public health and obesity in communities moves across to public health teams in local authorities, as the Government plans, commissioners need to be working closely with us.'

**REUTERS**

**Commercial diet schemes better than doctors' help**

By Kate Kelland

LONDON | Fri Nov 4, 2011 6:44pm GMT

Commercial weight-loss programs such as Weight Watchers and Slimming World are more effective and cheaper than family doctor-based services led by specially trained staff, according to the findings of a study published on Friday.

With a global epidemic of obesity putting huge pressure on health budgets, researchers at Britain's Birmingham University wanted to compare the effectiveness of doctor-led weight loss programs against several well-known commercial [schemeshttp://images.intellitxt.com/ast/adTypes/icon1.png](http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/11/04/us-weight-loss-idUKTRE7A34II20111104).

The results suggest that while commercial schemes generally help people to lose weight, doctor-led programs do not.

After 12 weeks, people in all the schemes studied had achieved significant weight loss, but the average loss ranged from the highest at 4.4 kg (9.7 lb) with Weight Watchers down to 1.4 kg on a program led by primary care staff.

A control group who were not put on any specific diet program but were given vouchers for free access to a gym for 12 weeks lost just as much weight on average as those using health clinic-based based weight-loss programs.

After a year, statistically significant weight loss was recorded in all groups apart from the primary care programs, but Weight Watchers was the only program to achieve significantly greater weight loss than the control group.

Kate Jolly, a clinical senior lecturer in public health and epidemiology at Birmingham who led the research, said primary care-based weight loss services led by specially trained staff are "ineffective" while commercially provided services "are more effective and cheaper."

Worldwide, around 1.5 billion adults are overweight and another 0.5 billion are obese, with 170 million children classified as overweight or obese.

Obesity takes up between 2 to 6 percent of healthcare costs in many countries.

This latest research, published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ), comes in the wake of the first gold-standard randomized controlled trial of Weight Watchers last month which showed that the program works far better than getting doctors to tell patients to lose weight.

Another study in the United States published in 2003 found that one year's free access to Weight Watchers resulted in an average weight reduction of 3.5 kg after one year.

In the BMJ study, which involved 740 obese and overweight men and women in Britain, several other commercial weight loss programs were also studied including Slimming World, Rosemary Conley and a group-based dietetics program as well as general practice one to one counseling and pharmacy-led one to one counseling.

Weight Watchers and Slimming World are both group-based weight-loss schemes where people trying to shed pounds are given dieting tips and encouraged to go to weekly meetings to be weighed and discuss their progress with other members.

At a cost of roughly 40 pounds ($64) for 12 weeks, they are also relatively inexpensive, particularly when compared to the billions of dollars spent on healthcare for overweight and obese people worldwide every year.

In a commentary on the BMJ study, nutrition experts Helen Truby and Maxine Bonham from Monash University in Australia said it showed there is "no simple [solutionhttp://images.intellitxt.com/ast/adTypes/icon1.png](http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/11/04/us-weight-loss-idUKTRE7A34II20111104)" to the obesity epidemic.

They said the UK's state-funded National Health Service (NHS) should be aware of the level of investment needed to develop an expert workforce to manage the problem of obesity, and said it could learn a great deal from commercial companies about how to deliver what consumers want.

telegraph.co.uk

November 4, 2011 Friday 7:00 AM GMT

**Diets work better with WeightWatchers than the NHS: research;   
NHS weight loss programmes are more expensive and less effective than WeightWatchers, a study has found.**  
**BYLINE:** By Rebecca Smith  
  
**LENGTH:** 421 words

Diet programmes such as Weight Watchers, Slimming World and Rosemary Conley are cheaper and far more effective than those run by the NHS, according to new research.

Dieters lost more weight and kept it off for longer by joining a slimming club than after having counselling from specially trained staff in GP surgeries or pharmacies, it was found.

Experts said money would be better spent on encouraging people to attend classes run by commercial companies.

The study, published online in the British Medical Journal (BMJ), involved 740 obese or overweight men and women recruited from one NHS trust in Birmingham.

They were divided into six groups and attended either Weight Watchers, Slimming World, Rosemary Conley, a group-based NHS programme run by advisers and dieticians called Size Down, one-to-one counselling sessions in GP surgeries, or one-to-one counselling in pharmacies.

Another group was provided with 12 vouchers for free entrance to a local fitness centre.

At 12 weeks, data was available for 658 of the participants and 522 after one year.

All programmes achieved weight loss at 12 weeks - from an average of 1.37kg in the GP group to 4.43kg in the Weight Watchers group.

But the NHS programmes were found to be no better than the people exercising at a local fitness centre at this point.

At the one year mark, all the programmes except the GP and pharmacy groups had resulted in "significant weight loss".

However, Weight Watchers was the only programme to achieve significantly greater weight loss than the control group - and was the best attended group.

Compared to the NHS programmes, commercially-run ones meant people typically lost an extra 2.3kg.

The authors, from the University of Birmingham, the Nursing and Midwifery Council and NHS South Birmingham concluded: "Commercially provided weight management services are more effective and cheaper than primary care based services led by specially trained staff, which are ineffective."

A spokesman for the Department of Health said: "Weight management programmes can be very cost-effective and make losing weight easier for some people, but the best way to lose weight will be different for everyone.

"The local NHS must think about which weight management service will work best based on an individual patient's needs."

In September, another study conducted in the UK, Germany and Australia showed that a year-long Weight Watchers programme was far more beneficial than helpful doctor's advice.

That study was published in The Lancet medical journal.

The Express

November 4, 2011 Friday   
U.K. 1st Edition

The best way to lose weight and live longer  
  
**BYLINE:** By Jo Willey  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; 07  
  
**LENGTH:** 308 words

LOSING weight can add a year to your life, a study has found.

But commercial weight loss programmes are more effective and cheaper than schemes run by the NHS.

Offering patients counselling in diet and fitness via GP surgeries or pharmacies is "ineffective", as are programmes run by NHS food advisers and dieticians, the researchers found.

They said NHS cash would be better spent on encouraging people to attend classes run by commercial companies such as Slimming World, Weight Watchers or Rosemary Conley.

The study, published online in the British Medical Journal, involved 740 obese or overweight men and women recruited from one NHS trust in Birmingham.

They were divided into six groups and attended either Weight Watchers, Slimming World, Rosemary Conley, a group-based NHS programme run by advisers and dieticians called Size Down, one-to-one counselling sessions in GP surgeries, or one to-one counselling in pharmacies.

A control group was provided with 12 vouchers for free entrance to a local fitness centre.

All the participants were assessed after 12 weeks and again after a year.

In the first 12 weeks, they lost an average of 3lb and their life expectancy was calculated to have increased by about a year.

But the NHS programmes were found to be no better than the control group (people exercising at a local fitness centre) at this point.

At the one year mark, all the programmes except the GP and pharmacy groups had resulted in "significant weight loss" - typically an extra 5lb.

People were also least likely to attend sessions held at GPs' surgeries.

The researchers, from the University of Birmingham, the Nursing and Midwifery Council and NHS South Birmingham, concluded:

"Commercially provided weight management services are more effective and cheaper than primary care based services led by specially trained staff, which are ineffective."

The Independent (London)

November 4, 2011 Friday   
First Edition

**Revealed: the diet that's worth its weight in gold;   
Study names Weight Watchers plan as best way to shed pounds**  
**BYLINE:** JEREMY LAURANCE Health Editor  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 16  
  
**LENGTH:** 836 words

If you want to lose weight, a commercial company is more likely to help you shed the excess pounds than the NHS, researchers have found.

A comparison of three commercial weight loss clubs - Weight Watchers, Rosemary Conley and Slimming World - with programmes provided by GPs, pharmacists and dieticians, has shown the private sector comprehensively beats the NHS when it comes to helping people slim.

The research was carried out in south Birmingham, where overweight patients selected by their GPs were offered the chance to be referred to a weight-loss programme paid for by the NHS.

Half of the 740 patients were referred to the commercial slimming clubs and half to NHS programmes.

The greatest weight loss achieved was 4.4 kgs after 12 weeks, for the patients allocated to Weight Watchers while the smallest was 1.4kgs for those allocated to their GPs.

After one year the Weight Watchers group was the only one to achieve significantly greater weight loss - 3.46kgs - than the control group.

Despite GPs' poorer results, their programme was the most expensive, at £112.73 per patient, compared with £76.87 for Weight Watchers (the price charged to the NHS).

The Rosemary Conley programme also cost £76.87 and Slimming World £71.37.

The study, by researchers from the University of Birmingham and published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) is one of the first to compare NHS and private weight-loss programmes.

Two Australian nutrition experts say in an editorial in the BMJ that, on the basis of the results, the NHS should consider contracting out weight-loss programmes to the private sector, rather than training its NHS staff to provide them, to give patients more choice and bring better results.

"It is not surprising that primary care is less able to deliver weight-loss programmes than commercial companies, given the lack of resources compared with an industry that has invested millions to refine its products."

A key reason why the commercial companies scored greater success was that the patients allocated to them kept coming back week after week.

One in four adults in the UK is overweight or obese and 16 per cent are trying seriously to shed pounds at any one time.

Rosemary Conley claims 80,000 members in the UK and Weight Watchers 1.5 million worldwide.

A spokesman for the Department of Health said: "The local NHS must think about which weight management service will work best, based on an individual patient's needs."

Earlier research has shown that most people on a diet achieve their maximum weight loss after six to eight months.

It has been assumed this is a natural "plateauing" effect.

But evidence suggests that people find it hard to stick to a diet for longer than six months and that is why they stop losing weight.

DIETS DIGESTED HOW THEY WORK

WeightWatchers

Weekly one-hour meetings

Aim: cut 500 calories a day

Dieters are given a food points allowance based on age, sex, weight and height to create their own menus.

SAMPLE DIET

Breakfast: grilled bacon, tomato, poached egg, baked beans, mushrooms

Lunch: broccoli soup with stilton

Dinner: asparagus and feta frittata, low-fat yogurt with melon and a glass of white wine

Exercise: gradually build to 10,000 steps a day

Weight loss after 12 weeks: 4.43kgs (after one year: 3.46 kgs)

Slimming WORLD

Weekly 90-minute meetings

Aim: weight loss goals are set by the individual.

Dieters are encouraged to eat low energy-density foods, eg pasta, and restrict sugar and fat.

SAMPLE DIET

Breakfast: orange juice, Quorn sausages or lean grilled bacon, scrambled eggs, tomatoes and mushrooms, 1 slice wholegrain bread

Lunch: ham roll ups - six slices of ham with triangle of low-fat cheese, cucumber and carrot sticks, and salad

Dinner: cottage pie topped with swede, fat-free yogurt with honey

Exercise: gradual build-up to 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity five days a week

Weight loss after 12 weeks: 3.56 kgs (after one year: 1.89 kgs)

Rosemary Conley Diet and Fitness Club

Weekly 90-minute meetings

Aim: cut calories to achieve 0.5 to 1.5 kgs weight loss a week.

Dieters are given a calorie allowance based on age, sex, weight and height to create their own menus.

SAMPLE DIET

Breakfast: orange juice, one slice of wholegrain bread with marmalade, jam or honey

Lunch: two low-fat beef or pork sausages, baked beans, fried egg (no oil), tomatoes, mushrooms

Dinner: chinese chicken kebabs with rice

Exercise: optional 45-minute class with each session

Weight loss after 12 weeks: 4.23kgs (after one year: 2.12 kgs)

NHS

Weekly one-to-one sessions with GP

Aim: to lose 5-10per cent of body weight at 0.5-1 kgs aweek

Dieters were shown the Eatwell plate which sets out the different types of food and the proportions in which they should be eaten: plenty of fruit and vegetables, potatoes, bread, rice and pasta.

Some milk and dairy foods, meat, fish and eggs.

A small amount of fatty and sugary foods

Exercise: gradual build up to 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity 5 days a week

Weight loss after 12 weeks: 1.37 kgs (after one year: 0.83 kgs)

The Mirror

November 4, 2011 Friday   
3 Star Edition

**SLIM ON NHS? FAT CHANCE;   
PRIVATE DIETS CHEAPER, BETTER**  
**BYLINE:** LACHLAN MACKINNON  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 18  
  
**LENGTH:** 282 words

IF you want to fight the flab, join a group like Weight Watchers - it'll shift the pounds far better than following an NHS diet plan.

Research has found that signing up to private weight-loss clubs such as Slimming World and Rosemary Conley, beats getting "ineffective" diet and fitness counselling on the health service.

In fact, experts reckon the money currently shelled out on such NHS programmes would be much better spent on encouraging people to attend classes run by private companies.

The study, published in the British Medical Journal, involved 740 obese or overweight men and women from one NHS trust in Birmingham.

Divided into six groups, the participants attended either Weight Watchers, Slimming World, Rosemary Conley, NHS-run Size Down, one-to-one counselling in GP surgeries, or one-to-one pharmacy counselling sessions.

After 12 weeks, all six groups had lost weight - from an average of 3lb in the GP group to 9.7lb in Weight Watchers.

But at this point the NHS programmes proved no better than a control group of people exercising at a local fitness centre.

And after a year, all but the GP and pharmacy counselling groups had "significant weight loss".

In fact, those attending commerciallyrun groups typically lost an extra 5lb, exercised more and were more likely to actually turn up to the classes.

The study's authors, from the University of Birmingham, the Nursing and Midwifery Council and NHS South Birmingham, concluded: "Commercially provided weight management services are more effective and cheaper than primary care-based services."

In September, another study showed a year-long Weight Watchers programme was more beneficial than helpful GPs.