

Battle of the bulge beaten at local weight loss clinics

By DEB BODINE CHAMPION
If the thought of being seen in a swimsuit plummets you to the darkest depths of depression, take heart. There are many weight loss facilities in the Markham area to provide the support needed to successfully drop those excess pounds — before summer arrives.

A more streamlined, attractive body is not the only reason for maintaining an ideal weight.

Health experts agree that individuals who are moderately overweight — that is 20 per cent over their ideal weight — significantly increase their risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and certain types of cancer.

Although each of the weight loss programs differ in some respects, there are several common factors linking them.

All provide a support system for the dieter, offering some type of behavior education. All counsellors have lost weight through the program they endorse.

If a doctor's approval is not re-

quired, it is highly recommended. All suggest a low-fat, nutritionally balanced diet, combined with an increased intake of water.

Most significantly, all weight loss counsellors emphasize that the toughest part of losing weight is keeping it off.

PHYSICIANS' WEIGHT CONTROL CLINIC

Before and after shots of clients successful at losing weight adorn the walls of the reception area of the Physicians' Weight Control Clinic, located on the upper level of Markham Place.

A large plastic-wrapped oblong of lumpy yellow matter labelled "5 lbs. of human fat" adorns a table.

Staff members bustle about in full nurse's uniform complete with caps, ushering overweight clients into consultation rooms for their private weigh-in and counselling session.

Jerry Kofsky, clinic director, explained that each new patient is required to have a medical screening including blood work

and urinalysis, and ECG's for those over age 50.

"The blood work is everything," said Mr. Kofsky, adding that unknown medical problems that can affect the weight loss program become apparent as a result of the tests.

Calorie counting

The staff at Physicians' Weight Control Clinic consist of registered nurses, a weight loss consultant who has lost weight through the program, a nutritionist who puts meal plans together and a doctor who decides which plan is suited to each client.

There is no calorie counting at Physicians' Weight Control Clinic. Meal plans are composed of allotted portions from the different food groups — protein, milk, fruits, vegetables, breads and fat.

Each meal plan is individually suited to the client and involves food that he or she has grown up eating. There are no special products to purchase.

Clients are required to visit the clinic at least three to five times weekly for private consultation and support.

A commitment to the program is required and the expected weekly weight loss is four to six pounds for men and three to four pounds for women.

As well as private sessions, behavior modification classes are held weekly to help clients change their attitudes toward food — from that of an overweight person to that of a slim one.

Guest speakers are brought in, cooking sessions are held and recipe booklets are published to assist clients in reaching their goals.

"There is no short-term problem solving here. You ate your way into this, you have to eat your way out," Mr. Kofsky said. He speaks from experience, having lost 30 lbs. himself.

DIET CENTRE

Diet Centre members are able to weigh-in at any of the more than 2,000 outlets throughout North America. The Markham Diet Centre, originally in the Tremont House on Main St., has been in operation for 3½ years and is



Dieter Susan Alpay looks delighted with her weigh-in by Diet Centre Counsellor Valerie Gaul during last Saturday's open house. There are several diet centres with varying programs in the Markham area.

— Sjoerd Witteveen

currently located at 254A Main St. N.

The Diet Centre program consists of four phases.

Phase I, the conditioning phase, is designed to prepare the dieter mentally and physically for weight reduction.

The body is cleansed of food additives and sugars. The diet is reduced to a moderate range of calories based on an intake of fresh fruits, vegetables, lean meats and whole grains. Phase I lasts for two days.

Phase II, the reducing phase, is maintained until the goal weight is reached.

Following a nutritionally balanced diet which is low in fat, moderate in protein and carbohydrate controlled, the dieter is monitored daily at private weigh-in and counselling sessions. On average, dieters can lose 17 to 25 lbs. in six weeks.

Wider variety

Phase III is the stabilization period, during which a wider variety of foods, in greater quantities, is gradually re-introduced to the diet.

Counsellor Valerie Gaul says the new ideal weight is locked in, largely through the use of greater amounts of protein.

Phase IV is the maintenance phase and lasts the dieter a lifetime. Members are monitored for one year and are able to return for assistance at any time.

The key to the Diet Centre program is the stabilization of the blood sugar concentration. Each dieter receives a food supplement between meals during Phase II, consisting of soy protein, fructose and dextrose (natural sugars), B-vitamins and protein.

The tablet is designed to maintain blood sugar levels, thus controlling insulin response, resulting in increased energy levels and curbed appetites.

The diet is supplemented by a weekly program in nutrition education and behavior modification. Dieters learn how their bodies function, how attitudes affect behavior and how to develop a positive self-image.

Not easy

A lifetime membership with the Diet Centre costs \$40, and the cost of the individual program varies according to the amount of weight there is to lose.

Payment is made throughout the reducing phase, so that during stabilization and maintenance there is no charge.

The Diet Centre carries a selection of diet products which members find helpful, but Ms. Gaul emphasized that they are not necessary to lose weight. To purchase any of the products, it is

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