

Weight-Loss Study Determines That TOPS Is Effective

MILWAUKEE, WI – Recent findings from what is believed to be the largest study of a weight-loss program in the United States indicates that TOPS Club, Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), the nonprofit weight-loss support organization, is associated with clinically significant weight loss among participants who remain in the program for at least one year.

According to a study published in *Obesity*, the official journal of The Obesity Society, TOPS participants who renewed their annual membership consecutively over a period of one to three years lost between 5.9% and 7.1% of their initial weight. People who remained in the program lost 6% of initial weight in the first year and maintained that weight loss for up to three years.

The Institute of Medicine defines successful long-term weight loss as “losing at least 5% of body weight...by the completion of a weight-loss program... and keeping it [off]...for at least one year.” The average weight loss estimated in this study exceeds these criteria for successful long-term weight loss which have been associated with improved health benefits, including decreased likelihood of developing heart disease, lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and the reduction of sleep apnea symptoms.

Study authors Nia S. Mitchell, L. Miriam Dickinson, Allison Kempe, and Adam G. Tsai, all of the University of Colorado Denver, examined data from nearly 43,000 TOPS members who joined between Jan. 1, 2005, and Dec. 31, 2007, and who had at least one membership renewal between 2006 and 2008. Members were weighed at weekly meetings by the chapter weight recorder and subsequently submitted to TOPS' national headquarters by local Field Staff. In addition to regular group meetings designed to reinforce healthy habits, such as setting reasonable goals, increasing physical activity, portion control, and food journaling — major components of TOPS' weight-loss philosophy, the TOPS program includes a six-week “quick-start” guide, *My Day One*, and a one-year subscription to *TOPS News*, the organization's members-only magazine.

The researchers noted the substantial difference in cost between TOPS and commercial weight-loss programs, like Weight Watchers and Jenny Craig. A nonprofit organization, TOPS' annual membership fee is \$26 in the United States and \$30 in Canada, plus nominal chapter fees (on average, \$5 per month) collected for local chapter expenses. There are no special foods to purchase.

TOPS chapters are also led by volunteer leaders who are elected by their peers. The study authors speculate that the lower dropout rate in TOPS could be due to the camaraderie, support, and recognition that develop from regular chapter meetings because participants may hold offices in the chapter.

“We are pleased that the findings of this landmark study further confirm that members of TOPS can experience measurable and lasting weight-loss success,” said Barbara Cady, TOPS President. TOPS has been shown to be as successful as commercial groups and plans that have been scientifically studied and evaluated in recent years. These include the 2005 JAMA study of Ornish, the Zone, Weight Watchers and Atkins. TOPS is affordable and available throughout the US and Canada.

Visitors are welcome to attend their first TOPS meeting free of charge. To find a local chapter, view www.tops.org or call (800) 932-8677.