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Hillcrest Hospital's "Healthy Weigh" delivers big results

When You Think You Can't Lose

By Sherri Kightlinger

After struggling with being overweight most of her life, Tammy Stitz is now in control. She lost more than 40 pounds in Hillcrest's "Healthy Weigh" program and has successfully kept the weight off for more than a year. "I now have a one as the first digit of my weight," Stitz says. "Through the program's informative lectures and group exercise, I am excited that I've finally learned how to lose weight, and I feel great," Stitz adds.

The educational program packs powerful results because it is designed to combine proper nutrition with safe and monitored exercise in a team environment. That means victory for many who have struggled to lose weight unsuccessfully for years. For others, diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, metabolic syndrome or a family history of coronary artery disease are key reasons to lose weight and eat healthier.

Starting Out

At the beginning of the 12-week program, each participant meets individually with Shannon Herchick, exercise physiologist and Healthy Weigh manager. They also meet with Jennifer Grogan, a registered diet technician who is certified in adult weight management.

Herchick's initial evaluation includes body composition screening that calculates body mass index, waist circumference and body fat percentages. It also includes resting blood pressure and heart rate. She

also conducts a fitness test to accurately develop each participant's exercise program.

Grogan's individual meeting discerns eating patterns, and guides participants on how to choose healthy foods, the right portion sizes and how to avoid foods that cause inflammation.

Fitness and Field Trips

During the Tuesday/Thursday meetings, one evening is devoted to both lecture and exercise, and the other is monitored group exercise. Herchick and Grogan lead the lectures on a variety of topics and also have two guest educators during the course.

One of the lecture nights is a field trip to the grocery store. Grogan teaches participants how to read labels and pick healthier choices.

Before and after exercise, Herchick takes participants' resting heart rates and blood pressure readings. Then as a group, participants warm up and cool down before and after three 13-minute exercise sessions. During each

session, heart rates are monitored to ensure participants are working in their target heart rate zone.

For Stitz, a librarian, learning that regular exercise and choosing fruits and vegetables over carbohydrates are necessary for her to maintain her weight loss was enough. Others, like Chris Aguilar, a safety supervisor, need the discipline of a structured environment, which helped him achieve his 34-pound weight loss.

Like Stitz, Aguilar also has kept the weight off for more than a year. "While my wife was concerned about my high cholesterol and blood pressure, I knew I needed to lose the weight," Aguilar admits. A former member of the National Guard, Aguilar knew how to get into shape. But with a new baby at home, he stopped making time for it. "For me, turning in the journal every week was motivating. I didn't want to fail. So I recorded what I ate, portion sizes and recorded my vitals while exercising."

In its sixth year, Healthy Weigh is open to the community, Hillcrest employees and anyone seeking a healthier lifestyle. To begin the program, a doctor's prescription is necessary.

The program fee is \$349, and some insurance plans cover the cost. Participants who reach their target weight and maintain it for one year, receive a full refund. "You can't go wrong with this program," Aguilar adds. "Anyway you look at it, you're going to win." ■

Get Your Results

To enroll in Healthy Weigh or for more information about the program, call 440-312-8442.