
Weight management services

Summary

- Weight management services are offered by accredited practising dietitians (APDs), GPs, commercial weight loss programs and kilojoule-controlled meal providers.
 - Always consult with your GP before starting with any weight management service.
 - A reputable weight management service encourages you to lose weight slowly and safely, and offers advice on how to keep to a healthy weight for the long term.
 - Staying at your most comfortable weight can be achieved by focusing on a balanced lifestyle – combining healthy foods, at the appropriate portion sizes, with regular exercise.
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Managing your weight within a healthy range can reduce your risk of health conditions. Obesity is associated with health problems such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers.

Weight management services are offered by accredited practising dietitians, GPs, commercial weight loss programs, meal replacement programs (very low-calorie diets) and kilojoule-controlled meal programs.

If you are looking to lose weight, choose your weight management service with care. Some commercial weight loss programs offer safe weight management and lifestyle suggestions to their clients. Others may rely on unproven or unhealthy methods of weight control.

For information about gaining weight, visit Better Health Channel's [weight and muscle gain](#) fact sheet.

Talk to your GP about weight management services

Your GP knows your medical history and can either discuss suitable weight loss strategies or recommend an accredited practising dietitian.

It's important to speak with your GP before starting any weight loss program. This is especially important if you take any form of prescription medicine or if you have a pre-existing condition, such as:

- obesity
- diabetes (type 1, type 2 and gestational)
- pregnancy or breastfeeding
- kidney disease
- liver disease
- food allergies
- digestive system disorders such as coeliac disease
- high blood pressure
- heart disease, angina or cardiac arrhythmia
- an eating disorder (or a history of disordered eating)
- cancer
- epilepsy
- thyroid disease
- depression
- gall bladder problems such as gallstones
- gout.

Advice about weight management services

Your GP or an industry body such as the **Dietitians Association of Australia** can help you make a safe choice when choosing a weight management support service.

The Dietitians Association of Australia is the national association for dietitians, with branches in every state and territory. Standards of practice are contained in the **Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) Program**.

Choosing a dietitian

Accredited practising dietitians are recognised professionals who can provide expert nutrition and dietary advice. Dietitians can guide you to sound food and health information that is specific to your individual needs.

You can contact a dietitian in various ways, including:

- Your GP may recommend and refer you to a suitable dietitian.
- Your council can provide a list of local dietitians.
- There may be a dietitian based at your local community health service.
- You can use the Better Health Channel services directory to find a dietitian.
- You can use the Dietitians Association of Australia '**find an Accredited Practising Dietitian**' search function.

Choosing a reputable weight management service

Generally speaking, a good weight management service will:

- aim to improve overall health, such as lowering blood cholesterol, and reducing your risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease
- encourage a balanced approach to eating, including foods from all of the core food groups and at appropriate portion sizes
- choose appropriate portions of each core food group, specific to your individual requirements
- focus on decreasing body fat (for example, waist measurement), not just total body weight
- include regular exercise and physical activity, most days of the week
- advise against a daily energy intake of less than 5,000 kJ (or 1,200 calories per day)
- recommend a gradual weight loss of around one to four kilograms a month to begin with, and aim for 10–20 per cent loss of total body weight in the longer term (if required)
- welcome input from your GP or healthcare professional
- advise on how to improve long-term eating and exercise habits
- offer ongoing support with your weight management, even when you have achieved your target weight
- offer details on all fees and costs of additional items
- give clear information on the refund policy.

Weight management services to avoid

Don't use a weight management service that advises you to:

- cut out one or more of the major food groups
- replace food with powders or supplements
- encourage short-term changes to eating behaviours, rather than longer-term, sustainable changes
- use unproven or unsafe equipment such as saunas, passive exercise machines, diuretics and body wraps
- aim for rapid weight loss
- focus on quick weight loss, but doesn't include any guidance on how to maintain a healthy weight for the long term
- sign up without being clear about all fees and costs of additional items
- sign up without offering you clear information about their refund policy
- consult with social media sites for weight management and health advice.

If you decide to start a very low-calorie diet (VLCD) using meal replacement shakes, bars or soups, consult a

dietitian to make sure you:

- are still meeting all your nutritional requirements
- have ongoing support to continue the program
- have access to advice for reintroducing solid foods to avoid any weight regain.

Choosing a kilojoule-controlled meal service

When choosing a home-delivered meal service, make sure that the service offers:

- a written health warning about the dangers of rapid weight loss, including the suggestion to consult with your doctor
- detailed written information on the services offered, including delivery arrangements and the nutritional value of the meals
- clear information on all costs, including delivery charges
- the option to cancel after five days, including a pro rata refund.

Making a complaint about a weight management service

If you are unhappy with a weight management service, make a complaint to the company. If you are unsatisfied with the response or outcome, you can take the complaint further.

Depending on the weight management service chosen, you could contact:

- **Consumer Affairs Victoria** – this is a government body that can also advise about such complaints.
- the **Dietitians Association of Australia** (regarding complaints about accredited practising dietitians).

Where to get help

- Your GP
- Community health centre
- **Dietitians Association of Australia**. Tel. 1800 812 942
- **Diabetes Australia**, Information and Advice Line Tel. 1300 437 386
- **Life! Helping you prevent diabetes, heart disease and stroke**. (Victorian based program) Tel. 13 RISK (13 7475)
- **Consumer Affairs Victoria**. Tel. 1300 55 81 81, Koori helpline 1300 66 15 11

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Diabetes Australia Victoria

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