

Exercises for overweight supplement diet program

A carefully planned program of moderate exercise designed to help many overweight people lose weight faster — and to shatter psychological barriers surrounding exercise — has been introduced in this area by Weight Watchers.

Pepstep, Weight Watchers Personal Exercise Plan, seeks to get the medically-able overweight "off the sidelines" so that they can enjoy the benefits of participation in a sound physical fitness program as well as lose weight, explained Mrs. Florine Mark, president of Weight Watchers of Southfield.

"The plan is an option supplement to the highly successful weight loss and weight maintenance programs conducted by Weight Watchers," she said.

"The exercises will not be performed in or around the classroom. Members choosing to take part in the exercise program can do them at home or at any place or time that's convenient.

"The unique feature of Pepstep is that it is designed specifically for overweight persons."

In addition to helping the medically-able lose and maintain weight loss, Pepstep focuses on the psychological barriers which often deter overweight persons from becoming involved in physical activities, Mrs. Mark explained.

"Frequently, overweight persons will resort to a number of preconceived ideas or misinformation in order to avoid exercise. With Pepstep, these artificial hurdles are overcome and the medically-able members of Weight Watchers can easily fit the exercise into their lifestyle."

"We are fully aware of the reasons why the overweight shun physical activity. Through Pepstep, we re-assure them on a number of questions that may previously have prevented their involvement in an exercise plan."

Pepstep was developed for Weight Watchers by Dr. Lenore R. Zohman, a well-known exercise cardiologist and specialist in cardiopulmonary rehabilitation.

Dr. Zohman said that the principal benefits of the plan as an adjunct to the diet are "better fat loss, a firmer body, temporarily reduced appetite and improved cardiovascular fitness."

In a report on the plan, Dr. Zohman said the key factors that sparked the development of Pepstep as an addition to the Weight Watchers eating plan and behavior modification program were:

1. The vast body of evidence that indicates that inactivity and sedentary lifestyle undoubtedly contribute to the problem of obesity.

2. New research demonstrating that long duration of easy to moderate exercise, rather than high intensity exercise can produce significant weight loss.

Dr. Zohman, author of the first textbook on cardiopulmonary rehabilitation, initiated the Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation Program at Montefiore Hospital and Medical Center, the major teaching hospital of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City.

She is chairman of the New York Heart Association's Committee on Exercise and has served as a resource consultant to the American Heart Association and the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

"The program," Dr. Zohman said in her report, "involves a choice of either stair climbing or walking. Each activity is of low intensity and long duration — the kind of exercise that specifically promotes a moderate physical challenge to help promote fitness and cardiovascular health."

"Since the exercise is moderate, it can be performed five days, rather than the usually recommended three days a week. Because it is easy and fun, it quickly becomes a part of the individual's lifestyle."

The stair-climbing program was modeled after a research study conducted in Finland; a study which showed improved physical fitness and fat loss in participants who climbed 25 flights daily, five days weekly.

"We've had similar success in our

own studies of Weight Watchers members who had treadmill exercise tests and body fat measurements before and after a 10-week Pepstep Program," Dr. Zohman said.

Dr. Richard B. Stuart, psychological director of Weight Watchers International, explained that the Pepstep plan is designed to overcome some of the fears held by overweight people who hesitate to participate in an exercise plan.

"Age is one of the excuses, or fears, that prevent overweight people from exercising," he said.

"The fact is that exercise can mean substantial benefits to any healthy person, regardless of his or her age."

"The notion that exercise will only increase appetite is another baseless fear. Research indicates that exactly the opposite is true. Appetite is diminished immediately after exercise and for a sufficient period of time thereafter to permit feelings of hunger to subside."

Dr. Stuart said some overweight people try to claim that exercise is only for athletes and they use the excuse in order to remain spectators, rather than participants.

"However," he said, "Pepstep is for overweight people whether they have athletic ability or not. The plan requires athletic skill nor interest in sports; only an interest in having a trim and firm body."

"The idea that 'everybody will be watching me' is another reason advanced by overweight people to avoid exercise. They feel that they will be targets of ridicule — a situation that would only compound their anxieties about being overweight."

"With Pepstep, however, participants do not use warmup suits or any special clothing and they can enjoy the program without fear of being conspicuous."

Finally, said Dr. Stuart, there is the excuse that a busy schedule prevents involvement in an exercise program.

"But," he said, "people who become

fit have more energy and require less sleep, so that in the long run, overweight persons will find that they actually are saving time by exercising."

Benefits of physical activity cited by Dr. Stuart included:

- Improved mood and energy level.
- Demonstration to oneself that positive action on health behaviors can be

taken and maintained.

• Demonstration to others that the overweight person is indeed committed to developing a new health behavior lifestyle.

Mrs. Mark said the program now is being introduced to current members of Weight Watchers and will be introduced to all new members in the future over a three-week period.

The introductory period is designed to screen out those for whom the exercises would not be advisable and to relieve any fears or reservation about the benefits of exercise, she explained.

"Moderation and safety are stressed," she said.

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