



Weight Reduction Centers

When it comes to weight loss, there is no shortage of options. There are many programs to choose from – each claiming to have the perfect plan for slimming you down. Check weight reduction centers or online programs carefully before you sign a contract or pay any money down, or you may lose money instead of pounds.

Consider your needs

Before starting a weight loss program, consider these factors:

Experience with past diets

What did you like or dislike about them? Were you able to follow the diet? What worked or did not work for you? How did you feel physically and emotionally while on the diet?

Your preferences

Do you prefer to diet on your own or do you like to get support from a group? If you prefer group support, do you prefer online or in-person support?

Your budget

Does the cost fit your budget? Will you be required to buy supplements, meals, visit clinics, or attend support meetings?

Other considerations

Do you have health conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease? Do you have food allergies, cultural requirements or food preparation preferences?

State regulation

Weight reduction centers are regulated by Wis. Stat. § 100.177, governing fitness center and weight reduction center contracts. The law helps protect consumers and provides a way to obtain refunds for undelivered services. Under the law:

- Weight reduction programs with physical centers must disclose the identity and location of facilities available to customers. The general nature of the services to be provided should also be identified.



- Weight reduction centers must specify the length of time covered by the member's contract, which cannot exceed two years. If the contract includes a weight maintenance program, the contract can be longer but cannot exceed three years.
- The full price of the contractual obligation must be disclosed, including any interest or other charges.
- New members must be informed of their three-day right to cancel with specific language on the written contract.
- Weight reduction centers that require members to pay more than \$100 in advance fees are required to establish proof of financial responsibility with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

Choosing a weight reduction center

If you are interested in services provided by a weight reduction center, shop around and compare several. Consider the following before making a choice:

- Exactly what services, food or other products are included in the membership fees? Most centers have several types of membership plans.

- Check references from people you know have used the program. Do not be swayed by celebrity endorsements or a few dramatic testimonials.
- Will there be any kind of professional supervision provided? Consult with your personal physician regarding any potential health issues before beginning any program.
- What are the fees? Find out the full costs and obligations of the membership, including extra charges for special dietary supplements or special foods. Is a maintenance program part of the package or does it cost extra?
- Is the center's location convenient? Do you find the atmosphere comfortable?
- Is the center well managed? Ask current and past members their opinions of the staff and the program.
- Is the program/center in good financial condition? How long has it been operating?
- Will you get a refund if you move away from the area or cancel your agreement? Get any refund policy in writing.

Do not feel pressured by persuasive sales techniques from center personnel. Take the time to thoroughly review the center/program and understand any contract you are asked to sign.

There is no single weight-loss program that will help everyone who tries it. Research has shown that while some dieters succeed in taking off weight, many fail to keep all of it off in the long run. To lose weight safely and permanently requires long-term changes in daily eating and exercise habits.

Always consult with a physician, dietitian, or other qualified health professional regarding your personal circumstances before starting any new weight reduction program. Your doctor can review any medical problems that you have, any possible complications with medications you take and help you set weight loss goals. You can also discuss exercising safely, especially if you have current health issues or disabilities.

The reality is that almost any diet that restricts calories will result in weight loss, at least in the short term. The real challenge, keeping the weight off, comes with

making the necessary lifestyle changes in healthy eating and regular physical activity as part of your normal routine.

For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact:

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