

Health Promotion Practitioner

Practical solutions for health enhancement programming

Why Weigh Every Day?

Health Enhancement Systems *NutriSum*: *Healthy Weight for Life* program has produced significant participant results in less than 6 months on the market. Among the more impressive statistics across 4 organizations to date:

- Weight loss averages of 9-14 pounds in the program's initial 13-week phase
- 40% increase in physical activity
- 90% increase in produce consumption
- 4.5 level of confidence (on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being "very confident") in ability to maintain weight loss.

Some experienced health promoters have questioned *NutriSum's* recommendation to weigh every day. The traditional advice is once a week or less often, supported by this and related thoughts: weighing every day could be discouraging because people can do everything right the day before and still go up a half pound. True... but that's exactly the point; by weighing every day, people learn that weight fluctuations are normal and it's the overall trend that matters.

Preventing Weight Regain

The biggest challenge with weight loss programs is not losing weight. Thousands do that every year, but the vast majority regain most or all of the weight in 12-18 months. *The greatest value of daily weighing is preventing weight regain.* Studies on individuals enrolled in the National Weight Control Registry (www.nwcr.ws) show that those who weigh regularly are least likely to regain

weight (no matter what method they used to lose the weight initially).

Obsession With Weight

Another argument we've heard against daily weighing is the potential to create an obsession or neurosis. It's an interesting theory, but has no basis in fact that we've been able to find, either in the literature or in practice with hundreds of *NutriSum* participants so far. People who weigh themselves every day appear no more obsessed with weight than people who brush their teeth every day are obsessed with oral health.


Old Health Recommendations Die Hard

Mainstream health advice is hard to change, even when there's good evidence to the contrary. For example, we know many health promoters who continue to suggest to sedentary clients that little changes here and there add up, when there's zero evidence that just parking farther from the entrance or taking the stairs instead of the elevator produces any marked improvement in health or long-term commitment to an active lifestyle.

When you review the studies of individuals who have gone from little or no exercise to consistent exercise, almost all have made *big* changes, including the nearly universal step of setting aside time to exercise. Most add more activity to their daily routine, but almost all start with dedicated time to exercise, not the notion of doing a little bit more here and there.

Continued

A habit becomes a habit through ritual and repetition. Taking your shower, having your morning cup of coffee, and sorting through junk email first thing at work are habits because they're done at the same time and in the

same way every day. For those who want to lose weight and keep it off, daily weighing needs to become a ritual that's reinforced through daily repetition, not once a week or whenever it's remembered. 



Dean Witherspoon is President of Health Enhancement Systems, a leader in behavior change innovation serving organizations in North America and throughout the world. With 20+ years experience, Dean has served on the Board of the Association for Worksite Health Promotion, spoken at more than 70 conferences, and published hundreds of articles. Before founding Health Enhancement Systems he held health promotion management positions with Kimberly-Clark Corporation, Presbyterian Hospital of Dallas, and The Dow Chemical Company. You can reach Dean at deanw@hesonline.com.