

# **How 10,000 people lost an average of 60 pounds and kept it off for over 5 years.**

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One of the biggest challenges with weight loss is that while weight loss is hard, keeping the weight off is even harder. We've all either experienced weight loss followed by a regain or have heard of many others who have struggled to keep weight off.

But there are many people who have been able to both lose weight AND maintain the weight loss. The National Weight Control Registry (NWCR) is a research-based database of 10,000 people who have lost over 60 pounds on average and kept all or most of it off for 5 years or more (on average).

So what have the researchers learned?

First of all, 80% of persons in the registry are women with an average age of 45. In general, middle-aged and older women usually have a harder time losing weight and keeping it off than younger women and men, so this is an encouraging finding.

When questioned about how they lost weight, there is quite a bit of variety among participants. Some lost weight slowly, others quickly, 45% lost weight on their own while 55% lost weight with the help of a program. However, 98% of participants changed their food intake in some way and 94% increased their physical activity (mostly in the form of walking).

When asked about how they maintained the weight loss, there was also quite a bit of variety but there were several similarities. Most participants continue to eat less and do high levels of activity:

- 90% exercise on average, about 1 hour per day.
- 78% eat breakfast every day.
- 75% weigh themselves at least once a week.
- 62% watch less than 10 hours of TV per week.

While these are certainly interesting findings, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- If you've struggled with an eating disorder, regular weigh-ins may not be right for you, always check with your health care provider.
- Even 10,000 people are a tiny fraction (likely less than 0.005%) of the people who are trying to lose weight.
- 96% of the members of this registry are white, 80% are women, 55% have college degrees and 29% have graduate degrees - which isn't an average population.
- That being said, the findings are interesting and do show that consistently eating less and moving (a lot) more are still vital in controlling weight.
- The wide variety of methods used by NWCR members adds evidence that there is no one perfect diet, program, medication, or surgery for everyone.
- A lot of this data was collected prior to the internet becoming such a big part of our lives. So we should work on decreasing overall screen time rather than just TV time.
- If you've struggled with weight loss and regain, consider using one or more of the pillars (used by a substantial number of the NWCR participants) described by Obesity Canada to support lifestyle changes: (1) Psychological and behavioral interventions, (2) Medications, (3) Surgery
- Consistency with eating well, sleeping well, controlling stress and mental health, and moving more is important for everyone, not just those who need to lose weight.