Welcome to Weight & Health Now, with the latest weight management news from Slimming World.

It’s been a busy quarter. Our study into the effect of Slimming World support on family lifestyles has recently been published in the Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics. We’re taking part in a pioneering weight loss referral scheme in Wigan. And we’ve just hosted the National Obesity Forum’s first ever Obesity Diploma Day here at our Derbyshire head office.

If you’d like any more information on these initiatives or on Slimming World in general please don’t hesitate to get in touch using the address overleaf.

Dr Jacque Lavin, R.Nutr
Slimming World Partnerships Manager and Nutritionist

Wigan leads the way in weight management

A pioneering weight loss initiative set up by NHS Ashton, Leigh and Wigan and involving Slimming World is delivering excellent results.

Launched in January 2009, the ‘Lose Weight Feel Great’ scheme is the first of its kind, pulling together a range of services to provide targeted healthy weight support for the adult population of the Wigan borough.

The initiative, which has been heavily advertised in the community, allows residents to call a central number to see what level of support they are eligible for – with the service they receive dependent on their weight and any related health problems.

Services provided include access to a new Lose Weight Feel Great website (www.lwfg.co.uk), a personalised dietitian led web-based dietary advice service, one-to-one support sessions with health trainers, an individually tailored community weight management service and a specialist weight management service. Between January and March over 2,000 people were referred to one of these services.

The Community Weight Management part of the service is being provided jointly by Slimming World working in partnership with Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust. Slimming World offers a programme of group support and dietary advice while supporting patients to build up their daily activity levels. The Trust then provides access to a range of activities and exercise sessions at a reduced cost, as well as free swimming sessions.

So far 1,300 patients have accessed the initial 12 week programme and 34% of those have achieved a 5% weight loss or more.

Jane Pilkington, Health Development Manager, said: “We’re delighted to have Slimming World involved in such a pioneering initiative. Two thirds of the adult population in Wigan Borough are overweight or obese and through ‘Lose Weight Feel Great’ we can offer tailored support to every single one of them – that’s a massive step forward.”

NOF Obesity Diploma Day hosted by Slimming World

Health professionals from all over the UK visited Slimming World’s Derbyshire head office in August to attend a National Obesity Forum (NOF) workshop.

More than 70 GPs, nurses, dietitians and public health specialists attended the first ever NOF ‘Obesity Diploma’ day, designed to improve understanding of obesity across the health sector. Speakers included Tam Fry and David Haslam from NOF.

NOF chose Slimming World’s Alfreton headquarters to host the one-day course because of its central location, state-of-the-art technical facilities and high quality 260 seat restaurant, serving healthy low-fat meals based around Food Optimising recipes.

Maria Voce, Company Secretary for the National Obesity Forum, says: “We’re always so impressed by the facilities at Slimming World. It’s a marvellous site. And we’re always so warmly welcomed whenever we visit the offices for meetings. It made absolute sense to hold the event here.”
SPREADING THE WORD:

How Slimming World members influence the people around them

Research published in the August 2009 edition of the Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics has found that Slimming World’s influence extends far wider than its 300,000 weekly group members, with 75% of people following the plan influencing others to make healthier food choices.

The study, ‘Influence of Slimming World’s lifestyle programme on diet, activity behaviour and health of participants and their families’, analysed the self-reported lifestyle changes of more than 2,800 respondents.

Food for thought

The research into people following the Food Optimising eating plan found:

- 78% now eat more fruit and vegetables
- 74% now eat less fatty foods
- 61% now eat less sugary foods
- 58% now eat fewer ready meals and takeaways.

At the same time more than one in three report that they buy and cook food for their family or partner as well as themselves, with 63% of those with a family saying that they all eat more healthily now. This suggests that the role of ‘family food provider’ could be a key to tackling obesity, especially among young people.

Influencing the influencers

Family food providers have a big influence on the eating habits of their family and the study data shows that this extra responsibility, in turn, has a positive influence on their own shopping habits.

Of the respondents who cook for their family, 85% buy more fruit and veg, 80% buy less fatty food and 71% buy less sugary food, suggesting that family food providers make even healthier choices than people who do not have a family to cater for.

This shows that by reaching the people who have the most influence on the eating habits of their families, Slimming World is able to indirectly improve the health of an even wider population.

With more than 95% of Slimming World’s members being women, it is most likely that mums are the key person responsible for passing on health messages to the family.

Improved health for the whole family

Over 80% of people following the Slimming World plan reported improvements in their own health. This increased to 87% among family food providers who also noted improvements in their partner’s health (37%) and their children’s health (30%) as a result of following the plan and sharing healthy habits with their family.

Many respondents reported improvements to conditions such as high blood pressure, asthma and diabetes, with 7% being advised by their doctor to stop taking or reduce their medication for these conditions.

Making healthy habits part of a routine

The Slimming World approach to weight loss provides people with tools to change behaviour, giving them the motivation and support they need to introduce small changes to their lifestyle and build them into their long term routine.

In keeping with this, the report found that over time members become more dedicated and see more improvements to their health.

Respondents who had been members for more than six months were far more likely to pass on healthy eating tips and recipes to family than those who had been members for less than one month (86% compared to 49%), while 90% of members who had attended for three months reported improvements in their health.

The study also found that respondents were more likely to report becoming more physically active the longer they had been a member.

Carolyn Pallister, Slimming World Dietitian, who was involved in the study, says:

“It’s great to know that while we are helping our members to improve their eating habits and become more active, they are passing those messages on to the people around them. The study shows our focus on family friendly advice is making a real difference, right across the UK.”

Weight & Health Now is published quarterly. If you’d like to receive future copies, please email your name, job title and address to weightandhealthnow@slimming-world.com. Your details will be used for this purpose only and will not be shared with anyone else.