

Trial Participants and Paying Customers Achieved Similar Weight Losses with a Commercial Weight Loss Program for Type 2 Diabetes

Clinical trials of weight loss interventions typically include highly selected participants who receive free treatment. Whether results achieved under those circumstances can be expected of persons who pay for treatment is unknown. We compared results from a randomized controlled trial (Foster et al., 2009) of a portion-controlled, low-glycemic index weight control program (Nutrisystem-D) with weight losses achieved by paying customers who tracked their progress online. The customer sample included all 5,588 individuals who, between 01/01/08 and 03/31/10, entered their weight at least twice: within 14 days of their initial order (baseline) and 3 months later. Weight loss (% baseline weight) and demographic characteristics are reported for these customers, as well as for all 35 participants in the clinical trial who were randomized to receive Nutrisystem-D plus weekly group-based behavioral counseling. Nearly three-quarters (74.3%) of clinical trial participants were women. Trial participants had a mean (SD) age of 52.1 (7.7) years, weight of 111.5 (19.3) kg, and BMI of 39.1 (5.5) kg/m². By comparison, the customer sample was 64.4% female, and had a mean age of 52.5 (11.3) years, weight of 107.5 (23.9) kg, and BMI of 37.6 (7.4) kg/m². At 3 months, mean (SD) weight losses were 8.2 (5.2) kg for the trial participants and 8.2 (4.2) kg for the customers, equaling reductions of 7.1 (4.0)% and 7.6 (3.4)% of initial weight, respectively. Reductions of 5% and 10% of body weight at 3 months were achieved by 67.7% and 23.5%, respectively, of trial participants and by 78.4% and 23.3%, respectively, of customers. In both cases, the observed pace of weight loss was near the midpoint of the 0.5-1.0 kg/week range that the program was designed to deliver. We note that both samples (i.e., clinical trial subjects and paying customers who long their weights online) likely represent highly motivated populations. Although we did not conduct statistical analyses to compare results across samples, it appears that both groups achieved similar weight loss results, despite receiving the Nutrisystem-D program in very different contexts.

Reference

Daggy BP, Fabricatore AN, Xiang Y. Trial participants and paying customers achieved similar weight losses with a commercial weight loss program for type 2 diabetes. *Diabetes* 2011; 60(suppl. 1): A702.