

Results Not Typical? Subjective and Objective Success in a Commercial Weight Loss Program

Background: Persons seeking weight loss often desire reductions that far exceed the typical results for their selected weight loss method. Modest reductions (5-10% of initial weight) may not be perceived as successful despite being clinically meaningful.

Methods: We examined desired weight losses among customers of a commercial weight loss program that includes home-delivery of portion-controlled foods (i.e., Nutrisystem). We also examined the percentage of customers who achieved their desired losses, as well as two clinically meaningful outcomes (5% and 10% reductions in initial weight), at 3 and 6 months. All overweight/obese customers who purchased a program from 1/1/08 to 12/31/10, and who recorded their weight online at baseline and 3 months, were included in the analyses.

Results: Participants were 103,693 customers (70% female) with a mean age of 46.9 years and BMI (by self-reported height and weight) of 34.3 kg/m² at baseline. The average desired loss was 54 lb, or 23.9% of initial weight. At 3 months, 4.5% of the sample had achieved subjective success (i.e., their self-selected goal). Those customers desired significantly smaller reductions than those who did not meet their goal (13.8% vs. 24.4%, respectively, $p < .001$). Controlling for the size of the goal, men were more likely than women to achieve subjective success. Objective success (i.e., achievement of clinically meaningful outcomes) was considerably more common. At 3 months, 79.4% and 33.3% of customers had achieved 5% and 10% reductions, respectively. Among those who continued to record their weight at 6 months ($n=32,280$), 11% had achieved their desired loss, and 86% and 63.4% had lost 5% and 10% of their initial weight, respectively.

Conclusions: Although customers of a commercial program rarely achieved their desired weight loss by 6 months, clinically meaningful weight loss was a typical result.

Reference

Fabricatore AN, Daggy BP, Xiang Y. Results not typical? Subjective and objective success in a commercial weight loss program. *Obesity* 2011; 19(Suppl. 1):S112. (Presented at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Obesity Society, Orlando, FL: October 2, 2011).