Slimming World explained

An innovative online program delivering an effective, evidence-based approach to healthy weight management

Information for health professionals
Highlights of some of Slimming World’s extensive evidence base are presented below. For a comprehensive summary of all Slimming World related research, you can view our full research portfolio at: www.slimmingworld.com/research

**Slimming World’s effectiveness**

The largest published evaluation of a national lifestyle weight management service, comprising over 1.3 million U.K. Slimming World members, found that, on average, in their first three months they:

- lost 3.9kg, 4.4% of their body weight
- reduced their BMI by 1.4kg/m²

Furthermore, those members who attended at least 75% of possible weekly group sessions, on average:

- lost 6.8kg, 7.5% of their body weight
- reduced their BMI by 2.5kg/m²

In the longer term, data from members attending at least 75% of possible sessions in their first year, shows that on average these members:

- lost 12.7kg, 13.2% of their body weight
- reduced their BMI by 4.7kg/m²

Slimming World’s program is also used as a clinical intervention in the U.K., where the majority of patients referred by their health care team achieve clinically significant weight loss at three and six months.

**Evaluation of online program**

Looking at the impact of Slimming World’s online weight management service, an evaluation of over 57,000 online members who registered with the program found that, on average, in their first three months they:

- lost 2.6kg, 2.9% of their body weight
- reduced their BMI by 0.9kg/m²

Increased service use was associated with enhanced weight loss outcomes. Looking at those who engaged highly with the service over a 3 month period, entering their weekly weight more than 10 times (>15,000 members):

- an average weight loss of 5.2kg (5.8%) was achieved
- BMI was reduced by 1.9kg/m²

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For more than four decades, Slimming World has helped millions of people lose weight at warm and friendly groups in the heart of communities across the U.K. We have used this knowledge and expertise in weight management provision to create an online group-based service which combines an easy-to-follow healthy eating plan with behavior-change tools to help members identify and overcome personal barriers to change, and so develop healthier habits for lifelong weight loss success. The generosity and flexibility of our Food Optimizing healthy eating plan, along with its focus on basic, everyday foods, means that it is suitable for practically every dietary requirement, health condition, lifestyle or cultural preference, including diabetes, Celiac disease, lactose intolerance and IBS.

Our online program has been successfully helping members lose weight and make healthy, easy and lasting lifestyle changes for almost 15 years in the U.K. Now, slimmingworld.com is available to people across the U.S. who’d love to lose weight and lead a healthier, fitter, happier life.

Slimming World integrates three key principles to help people adopt a healthier lifestyle:

• An easy-to-follow eating plan, which uses the science of energy density and satiety to satisfy appetite, reduce energy intake and promote healthier choices for life.
• A physical activity program to help members become less sedentary and gradually increase their physical activity levels.
• A warm, empowering, tool-packed website which supports members and facilitates behavior change around eating and activity habits.

Our program is a lifestyle. It’s not just a theory—it’s behavior change in action. We create a supportive environment that makes it easier for people to make healthy choices and changes. Unconditional caring support is key.

The leading slimming organization in the U.K., Slimming World was established in 1969 by founder and president Margaret Miles-Bramwell OBE, who remains the driving force behind the company today. Having experienced a lifetime of weight problems, it is her enthusiasm and vision as well as her understanding of the psychological and emotional burdens of being overweight that has made the program so successful.
With over four decades of experience in motivating and inspiring members to achieve their weight loss dreams, Slimming World has developed a sophisticated online support package.

We understand the vital importance of regular support during a weight loss journey, so our online program offers a weekly online group, together with an online support system providing all the tools, information, motivation and inspiration members need to accomplish their weight loss goals. The support they receive helps them develop personal strategies for lifelong success; including problem solving, action planning, self-monitoring, goal setting and motivational, emotional and practical support.
How does Slimming World work?

Each week members weigh themselves in the privacy of their homes and join their chosen online slimming group—based on a time they can commit to each week. During the group, members are taken on a journey of guided self-discovery facilitated by Slimming World-trained Consultants.

In the group they’ll join fellow members within a live online meetup to celebrate success, share challenges and solutions, and offer each other motivation and support through empathy, understanding, genuine care, and trust. A member’s weight will always be kept private, (though they can choose to share their weekly weight change with the group) and when they weigh in each week they are given the personalized help and support needed to succeed.

However, the support doesn’t end there. Between weekly online group meetings, members have 24/7 access to an online community where they’re able to post messages, questions or share ideas at any time for their group to see. The site also offers hundreds of delicious recipes, suggested eating plans, inspirational success stories and a food and activity planner to help develop new healthy lifestyle habits.

Members sign up initially for a structured 12 week program during which they learn step by step about Slimming World’s Food Optimizing eating plan, and are supported to get into new healthy lifestyle habits. After 12 weeks they continue their journey with full access to all of the website’s content and the continued support of the community and their weekly online meetup.

Healthy weight management online

- Members are encouraged to set sensible and realistic goals for long-term success, and choose their own weight loss targets.
- Members are encouraged to set a weekly weight loss target, and to create a mini action plan to help them achieve it.
- We encourage an average healthy weight loss of 1-2 lbs. per week. This is an achievable goal for the majority of people and helps them have realistic expectations.
- A personal progress chart helps members keep track of their weight and BMI change, and predict progress towards their personally chosen target.
- During the online group, members are able to share and celebrate every milestone achieved with awards and congratulations, including their first 5 lbs. and subsequent 5 lb. losses, losing 10% of their weight, and reaching their self-set weight loss target.

Recipes and menu plans

Every member has access to recipes, eating plans, articles and weight loss inspiration. These are regularly added to and updated and take into account individual tastes and preferences, family circumstances, allergies, health factors and work routines; as well as giving advice to help members enjoy vacations, eating out and socializing while remaining focused and in control of their weight loss goals.

Members can plan out meals within the online planning tool to help them keep focused on the week ahead. And for those with specific food requirements such as a vegetarian, dairy-free or gluten-free diet, example menu plans and information can be searched for across the site.

24/7 support and motivation

A unique feature of Slimming World is its sophisticated online support system which deals with so much more than praise for a good week or tips for the days ahead. We understand it’s when things are not going well that people need extra, in depth support, and our system has been developed to closely identify with the issues people face when they are not losing weight. The support is tailored to the individual member, taking into account how they feel about their progress, how long they have been a member and whether they have gained, maintained or lost weight that week. Using this information, a sophisticated and innovative algorithm delivers individual advice each week to help members make behavior changes to achieve their goals.

Our 24/7 support systems are made up of informative and educational articles, Slimming World’s social media channels, and two online communities; one for a member’s own slimming group where it’s just them and their group friends and one which is used by all of the online members. With these, members can share and receive support, hints, tips, and ideas for weight loss success. Our friendly Slimming World-trained Consultants are available in the community via a live chat button and email.
Food Optimizing is Slimming World’s healthy eating weight loss plan. Based on the principles of energy density and satiety to reduce energy intake, Food Optimizing empowers members to make healthier food choices, satisfy their appetite and lose weight – without calorie counting or obsessive weighing and measuring.

Food Optimizing is easy to follow, focusing on three main components:

1. The concept of Free Foods promotes consumption of plenty of low energy dense and highly satiating foods, eg poultry, fish, lean meat, pasta, grains, vegetables and fruit, which can be eaten without restriction. Members are encouraged to eat these foods to satisfy their appetite and bulk up dishes and meals with plenty of veg, naturally reducing overall energy intake. With Free Foods members don’t have to monitor every mouthful – so it’s easy to follow and sustain.

2. Healthy Extras help provide a good overall balance of nutrients in addition to those obtained from Free Foods, with particular emphasis on calcium and fiber-rich foods, eg milk, cheese, cereals and whole wheat bread.

3. The synergy between Free Foods, Healthy Extras and Syns makes Food Optimizing effective and easy to live with long term. Syns are the way members can enjoy the foods that many diets ban—without a shred of guilt! Tracking their allowance of Syns helps members naturally limit consumption of saturated fats, alcohol and sugar, ie those food and drinks with a high energy density and a poor ability to satisfy hunger.
The science behind Slimming World’s Food Optimizing plan

Research has shown that the nature and composition of the foods we eat, dietary macronutrients and energy density, impact on our sense of satisfaction and fullness (satiety)⁶. Encouraging a higher intake of more satiating foods will limit energy intake and result in weight loss. Slimming World has been actively involved in this field of research for many years. There is now a robust evidence base which shows that foods higher in protein and carbohydrates are far more satiating than foods rich in fat⁷,⁸.

Research also shows that people feel full due to the amount of food they eat, not the number of calories they take in. Choosing low energy dense foods can increase the volume of food eaten, to help satisfy the appetite and reduce energy intake to aid weight loss⁹.

Since its inception over four decades ago in the U.K., Food Optimizing has always successfully embraced the scientific principles of appetite regulation and energy density in a practical way to regulate energy intake, allowing members to eat unlimited amounts of highly satisfying foods, which will naturally help limit calorie intake without the chore of counting or feeling deprived.

“Food Optimizing incorporates scientific understanding of how foods affect our appetite and translates these principles into a way of eating that is practical for use in today’s world, so members can lose weight without restriction or deprivation.”

James Stubbs, Professor of Appetite Control and Energy Balance, University of Leeds, U.K.
The structure of Slimming World’s eating plan helps members naturally select a diet that meets current healthy eating guidelines. Food Optimizing promotes a reduction in calories, fat—particularly saturated and trans fats—and sugar, and the inclusion of plenty of fruit and vegetables each day.

Additional health notes guide members in following current government guidelines and recommendations on healthy eating.

All the major food groups are encouraged in line with the Choose My Plate model:

Members are encouraged to fill at least a third of their plate with fruit and vegetables, and make them their first choice between meals so it’s easy to achieve daily Choose My Plate recommendations for fruit and vegetables.

The rest of their plate is filled by choosing from a wide selection of Free Foods consisting of carbohydrate-rich foods such as starchy vegetables, rice, pasta and grains, and proteins including lean meats, skinless poultry, fish, beans, and meat replacements. Extra fiber-rich grains are also added each day as measured Healthy Extras.

To ensure a healthy intake of calcium we recommend members select two portions of calcium-rich dairy Healthy Extras such as milk, cheese and dairy free alternatives which, alongside calcium-rich Free Foods including fat free yogurt and cottage cheese, means members can easily achieve the Choose My Plate recommendation of three cups of dairy a day.

Foods that are high in fats and sugar are limited as Syns.

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**realistic and flexible**

**Food Optimizing:**

✓ takes into account individual needs and preferences
✓ adapts to all lifestyles, cultures and budgets, and is suitable for the entire family
✓ encourages slimmers to feel free and relaxed about food, eliminating the distress caused by feelings of guilt, hunger, deprivation and loss of control
✓ enables members to take control of their own health and lifestyle long term
✓ doesn’t ban foods or food groups
✓ doesn’t use expensive or specialist “diet” products
✓ is suitable for health conditions such as diabetes, Celiac disease, lactose intolerance and IBS

As part of the online registration process members must complete a personal profile which includes information about specific conditions such as diabetes, Celiac disease or high blood pressure. Members with these conditions, or those interested in knowing more, receive further information via email. We always advise members to check with their care team or health specialist before starting to follow the Food Optimizing plan, and to always follow their advice.

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**our research**

A survey of over 2,000 people following Food Optimizing showed that the program encourages significant changes towards healthier food choices in line with current guidelines:

- 78% now buy more fruit and vegetables
- 74% eat less fatty food
- 61% eat less sugary foods
- 58% eat fewer convenience foods and takeout food

Over 80% of people following Food Optimizing also reported improvements in their health. As part of a pan-European research program, Diogenes, data shows Slimming World members who have been following Food Optimizing for at least six months have an average percentage energy intake from carbohydrate of 51%, 21% from protein and 25% from fat.
Slimming World’s step-by-step activity program, Body Magic, complements our Food Optimizing eating plan by helping members improve their overall health and wellbeing while aiding long term weight management.

The program was developed in collaboration with Ken Fox, Emeritus Professor of Exercise and Health Sciences, University of Bristol, U.K. It uses well-established psychological and scientific principles of behavior change to help members find their own personal, enjoyable and sustainable ways of gradually increasing activity so that it becomes a regular part of their daily routine no matter what their starting point.

Members receive plenty of practical help to build up activity in steady stages, find enjoyable activities for themselves and their family, and share experiences. An interactive activity log helps them keep track and build up their activity levels, boost motivation with Body Magic goals and celebrate achievements and progress.

The unique program is in line with government recommendations, encouraging members to reduce sedentary behaviour and build up to at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity a week\textsuperscript{12}, and is suitable for everyone regardless of weight or fitness level.

To facilitate this behavior change, our online support program features activity planners, backed up by a series of rewards.

Slimming World members report increasing their activity levels after learning about Body Magic\textsuperscript{10}. They also report a number of additional benefits from participation in activity such as having more energy (37% of respondents), enjoying exercise now (33%), improved shape and posture (31%), being more mobile in daily life (29%), improved mood (25%), being calmer and less stressed (25%) and being able to sleep better (22%).
Don’t just take our word for it—meet the people who have transformed their lives with Slimming World.

Mark lost 49 lbs.*

“I wish I’d known about Slimming World 10 years ago. It’s not a diet, it’s a lifestyle change, and I’m a complete convert. People are amazed by how much I eat now—the difference is that it’s all healthy. One of the main effects of losing weight is how much more energy I have. My basketball coaches can’t believe the difference in me. I’m racing up and down the court really quickly and I’m in the best shape I’ve been for a decade!”

Can everyone join?

Our number one priority is keeping members safe and healthy. Because of this we’re currently unable to offer membership to young people or those with specific health requirements, as we’re not able to provide the most suitable support. These are people under the age of 18, people with a BMI under 23, pregnant women, people with cancer, liver or kidney disease and people with an eating disorder.
**Azra lost 60 lbs.**

“...The biggest and most welcome surprise about Slimming World came when I realized that, rather than having to give up familiar foods, I could easily adapt all the recipes I’d grown up on. Whatever your culture, with just a few small changes you can still enjoy your favorite meals and lose weight—Food Optimizing can work for everyone.”

**Michelle lost 61 lbs.**

“...Whenever I have a question, want to share an achievement or wish to talk about my progress, my group’s Consultant is always there. I found the online community very helpful—being able to search the recipes or post a picture of my homemade food and see other people’s was encouraging and also gave me meal-planning inspiration.”

**Gary lost 128 lbs.**

“...From day one I loved the sound of Food Optimizing. My wife and I can still enjoy our favorites, and we’ve had fun adapting them to healthier versions. My sleep apnea has improved so much that I no longer need a BiPAP machine to help me breathe and my grandchildren have the grandad they always wanted: one who can go out and play with them.”

**Megan lost 70 lbs.**

“...Since losing weight I’m physically and mentally stronger than I’ve ever been before. The physical changes are great, but the psychological changes I’ve had are the ones that have benefitted my life beyond anything I could ever have imagined. I feel as though Slimming World offered me a glimmer of hope at a time in my life where I didn’t have any. I have so much joy, hope and excitement in my life and I feel completely revived.”

*Slimming World members can expect to lose an average of 1 to 2 lbs. a week. Weight losses will vary according to members’ individual circumstances and the amount of weight they have to lose.*
Slimming World provides ongoing support for members while they are on their weight loss journey and to help them maintain weight loss once they reach their chosen personal target weight. Lifestyle change is crucial, and therefore our program focuses on supporting members to adopt practical, healthier lifestyle habits that will help them control their weight for life.

**Guidance on how to develop healthier eating and physical activity habits**

Slimming World’s healthy eating plan, Food Optimizing, encourages members to eat plenty of highly satiating, low energy dense foods while controlling intake of high energy dense foods. It empowers members to make healthier food choices, satisfy their appetites and lose weight. Members are supported in tailoring the plan to individual tastes, requirements and to achieve personally determined dietary changes.

Our physical activity program, Body Magic, is based on the understanding of the barriers overweight people may face in becoming more active. Members are supported in taking those first steps to becoming more active, and build up in small, steady increments, with the ultimate goal of the government-recommended level of at least 150 minutes of moderate activity a week. Practical advice and sharing of ideas helps members reduce sedentary behavior and make activity an intrinsic part of their day.

**Ongoing feedback, monitoring and support**

Members are encouraged to log their weight weekly and also to consider and record how they feel about their progress. To help plan and monitor their own dietary intake and activity levels, members have access to a food and activity tracker. A live weekly online group provides further personalized feedback, self-monitoring and support.

**Slow and steady weight-loss goals—usually ½ to 2 pounds per week (though weight loss may be faster at the start of the program)**

Members are encouraged to achieve a realistic weight loss and set their own personal goals. Although weight loss may be slightly faster when people start the program, over a period of time this averages out to a steady ½–2 lbs. each week. Our awards system recognizes members’ progress towards their final goals including a Club 10 award to promote the benefits of losing 10% their body weight.
Here’s how Slimming World also meets the specific guidance set out for online programs:\(^{14}\):

**Structured, weekly sessions offered online**

Slimming World offers live weekly online groups for members at a day and time that suits them, facilitated by a Slimming World-trained Consultant. Members celebrate success, share challenges and solutions, and offer each other motivation and support through genuine care and trust, as well as giving practical help and ideas.

**Support tailored to personal goals**

The program provides recipes, eating plans, features, inspiration and activity plans. These take into account individual tastes and preferences, family circumstances, allergies, health factors and work routines. Members are encouraged to set their own weekly goals and are supported through the live weekly online groups to plan for and achieve them.

**Self-monitoring of eating and physical activity using hand-held devices**

Members are encouraged to use a Weight Loss Planner which allows them to self-monitor their diet and activity. The food tracking facility encourages members to plan their meals and also to record what they’ve had. The activity tracker also encourages members to work towards activity awards.

**Regular feedback on goals, progress and results**

Members are encouraged to log weekly weight changes, how they feel about their weight change and set weight and action targets for the coming week. Supportive, tailored messages are communicated and the weekly live group, facilitated by a trained Slimming World Consultant, provides additional support to help members reach their goals.

**Social support from a group through bulletin boards, chat rooms or online meetings**

Members are encouraged to attend a live weekly online group, at a day and time chosen by them. Members celebrate success, share challenges and solutions, offer each other motivation and support through friendship, empathy, understanding, as well as sharing and benefitting from practical help and ideas. There is an online community where members can post messages to communicate with their fellow members at any time for support and advice.
Slimming World’s Nutrition, Health and Research Team

Graham Thomas, PhD, Brown University and The Miriam Hospital
Dr Thomas is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at the Alpert Medical School of Brown University and the Weight Control and Diabetes Research Center of The Miriam Hospital. His research is focused on the use of technology for measuring and intervening on health behaviors, with an emphasis on obesity and related conditions.

Paul Sacher, PhD, RD, Chief Research and Development Officer (USA)

Carolyn Pallister BSc (Hons), RD, Public Health Manager

Jenny Barber MSc, RNutr (Public Health), Nutritionist

Melanie Hingle, PhD, MPH, RD, University of Arizona
Dr Hingle is a nutrition scientist and public health researcher with more than a decade of experience in design, development, conduct, and evaluation of family-focused interventions for the prevention of metabolic disease in children, adolescents, and young adults. She has expertise in qualitative research methods, assessment of dietary intake, physical activity, and body composition. She is recognized for her work in wireless and networked technologies.

Dale Bond, PhD, The Miriam Hospital and Brown Alpert Medical School
Dr Bond is an Associate Professor (Research) of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at The Miriam Hospital and Brown Alpert Medical School. His research involves the use of mobile health technologies to assess and intervene on physical activity and sedentary behaviors within the context of obesity and bariatric surgery.

Slimming World’s U.S. Specialist Advisor Panel

Hollie Raynor, PhD, RD, LDN, University of Tennessee
Dr Raynor is a Professor in the Department of Nutrition at the University of Tennessee and holds a MS in Public Health Nutrition and a PhD in Clinical Psychology, as well as being a registered dietitian and a licensed psychologist. She serves as a member of the National Committee for Clinical Guidelines for Obesity for the American Psychological Association.

Jacquie Lavin PhD, MMedSci, RNutr, Head of Nutrition and Research

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References


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slimmingworld.com/science