

Is a community weight management programme effective for men?

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Introduction

Nearly two thirds of men in England are overweight/obese, compared to just over half of women¹. Men are far less likely to access their GP and consequently are at greater risk of dying from preventable diseases such as coronary heart disease². Limited data is available on men accessing weight management programmes, predominantly attended by women. The aim of this study was to evaluate men's engagement in, and effectiveness of, Slimming World's community-based weight management programme.

Methods

Slimming World currently operates 10,000 weekly weight management group sessions across the UK. Electronic weekly weight records were collated for self-funding adult members joining between January 2010 and April 2012. This analysis reports weight change outcomes in the male participants during their first 3 months attendance. Data were analysed by regression using the R statistical program.

Results

The data collection resulted in weight records for 1.26 million members, of which 63,123 were men (5%). For the men, mean (SD) joining BMI was 35.6kg/m² (6.3) and mean age was 44.4 years (13.3), compared to 32.5kg/m² (6.2) and 42.4 years (13.5) for the women.

Changes in weight and BMI along with the number of sessions attended are shown below. Mean weight losses were significantly different from zero ($p < 0.001$).

	Weight outcomes at 3 months				
	n	Weight change (SD)	% weight change (SD)	BMI change (SD)	Sessions attended (SD)
Men	63,123	-7.0kg (5.2)	-6.1% (4.3)	-2.2kg/m ² (1.6)	9.0 (3.9)

In comparison to females, males lost on average 1.5% more weight, experienced 0.7kg/m² greater BMI change and attended 0.8 more sessions. All comparisons were significant ($p < 0.001$).

Men attending at least 75% of possible sessions in the first 3 months (45.2%, $n = 28,509$) achieved even greater weight loss outcomes: mean (SD) BMI change was -3.2kg/m² (1.6), weight change -10.1kg (5.2) and percent weight change -8.8% (4.0).

Conclusion

This is the largest ever audit of men's outcomes in a lifestyle weight management programme which demonstrates that men attending Slimming World achieve significant weight losses in their first 3 months attendance. Due to the large scale reach of Slimming World's groups, the programme could have a significant impact on the health of men nationally, however initial engagement of men continues to be an area for development.

Reference:

1. Health and Social Care Information Centre, 2013
2. Men's Health Forum, 2010