

Free Weight-Loss Program for Residents of Rural Colorado

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DENVER —

State-funded program for residents of rural Colorado

Doctors had told John Wilson for years that his weight was a health problem, and that he needed to shed some pounds if he wanted to feel better. John tried on his own and did lose about 10 pounds ... for a while. But then he gained it back. So, he saw an advertisement for Get Fit Colorado, a free weight-loss program that uses counselors to guide people through lifestyle changes for long-term weight loss, he signed up. Six months later, Wilson is 40 pounds lighter and confident that he has made permanent changes that will keep the pounds off.

"I am really, really happy with the way it worked out," said Wilson. "The diet coach was really helpful. He motivated me, offered suggestions about what foods to eat and avoid, and answered by questions if I didn't understand something."

Get Fit Colorado is sponsored by National Jewish Medical and Research Center, Kaiser Permanente, and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. **The programs is being offered free of charge through a grant from the state of Colorado. It has recently been expanded from its original focus on 14 eastern Colorado counties to include rural areas around the state.**

Participants in the program call the toll-free number (1-888-229-2804) to register. They receive a packet that includes information on good nutrition, including a calorie counter booklet, a food diary, meal plans and recipes. They also receive a pedometer to track the amount of exercise they get. Over the course of a six-month program, participants receive eight phone calls from counselors, who help them develop a personal action plan to lose weight, encourage them, and offer suggestions for eating better and getting more exercise.

After losing 40 pounds, John feels confident he will be able to keep it off, because he has not just followed a specific diet, but made more lasting changes to his entire lifestyle. He eats out less often, eats less processed microwavable food, more fruits and vegetables, and is overall more aware of what he is eating and how it may affect both his weight and his nutrition. He is also getting more exercise.

He is feeling better as well. The peripheral neuropathy that causes his hands and feet hurt bothers him less now that he is carrying around 40 less pounds. He has found he has more energy as well.

John lost about 20 percent of his body weight, but doctors say health benefits kick in when overweight people lose as little as 5 percent of their body weight. Get Fit Colorado seeks to help people lose between 5 and 10 percent of their body weight.

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