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Weight-management center uses 'blend of amino acids, protein and fiber' to help people lose weight

By Kathleen E. Carey, Of The Times Staff



Jack Lawler of Drexel Hill after starting the 'Cookie Diet.'

MARPLE — Jack Lawler of Drexel Hill was used to being the heavy guy.

As a fourth grader, he played on the football team filled with eighth graders because of his size.

At 220 pounds, he learned to live with pained knees, borderline blood

pressure and the inability to run.

Then, he started to eat cookies. Lots of them. And, he shaved more than 60 pounds, having gone past his original goal.

"I know," he said. "It's hard to believe."

But, his snack of choice isn't any old cookie. It's the treat being offered by the "Cookie Diet" from the Smart for Life Weight Management Center, which just opened its first Delaware County location at 1974 Sproul Road.

"It's basically a blend of amino acids, protein and fiber," Dr. Allan Magaziner, the Cherry Hill, N.J., doctor and Philadelphia-area franchise owner, said about the cookie. He added the 2½-inch square treat is made of organic ingredients with no added sugar and no chemicals.

Magaziner said the franchise is more than 30 years old and 600,000 have been on the program.

He was drawn to the program after seeing a friend lose a significant amount on it. Then, based in Florida, he flew down to see how it worked.

There, he was inspired to open his first office in Cherry Hill two and a half years ago.

Magaziner described what he liked about it: "safe, effective, healthy, changing behavior, medically supervised, moderately priced, with a track record."

Advertisement

Clients come to the center and are administered a physical exam by a doctor, an EKG and a body composition analysis. Vitamins and medications are administered, if needed.

Then, clients meet weekly with a nurse and meet with a support group once a month, although there are also long distance programs.

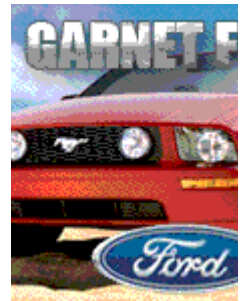
They can also meet with a doctor as often as they like.

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The initial cost of the program is \$250 and there is a \$100 monthly fee. The cookies cost \$6 per day.

The medical support is integral to the program's success.

"There's a lot more to it," Magaziner said. "It's not just about the cookie."

He said the cookie does help to curb the appetite, but clients are encouraged to learn the difference between hunger and feeling stuffed.



Lawler said his favorite is the chocolate flavored one, although there's also "Maine Blueberry," "Boca Banana" and "Garden Pizza."

His inspiration came a year ago after he injured his arm and he found himself at a rehabilitation center. There, he saw himself in the mirror.

"I'm looking around saying, 'That can't be me,'" Lawler said.

After hearing about the Cookie Diet on the radio, he thought he'd give it a try, planning to lose 40 pounds.

He started his program Nov. 1 and by last Thursday, had lost 64 pounds, reaching his maintenance phase.

Lawler admitted there were challenging times, as when co-workers would offer him a slice of pizza or when ice cream beckoned. "Inside, you're dying for a piece of pizza," he said, adding, "When you see results, it's easier to say, 'Thank you very much, but I'll pass.'"

Besides buying more clothes, he finds he's more energetic and he's more attentive to his work and his family, having abandoned the couch crashing.

"You feel better about yourself," he said. "Other than getting married and having my kids, it's probably the best thing I ever did."

Magaziner said he plans to add another seven stores in the Delaware Valley over the next 18 months.

"My goal, number one, is to cut down on some of the illnesses that we're seeing," he said, adding that he wants to get people to feel optimally healthy as well.

The Smart for Life Weight Management Center at 1974 Sproul Road in Broomall, across from the Lawrence Park Shopping Center, is open Monday and Thursday from 8 a.m.-7 p.m., Tuesday and Wednesday from 8 a.m.-4 p.m., and Friday from 8 a.m.-noon. The phone number is (610) 359-0333. Cookies can only be purchased by program participants.