
The
**Whitaker
Wellness**
Weight Loss Program

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*To Julian, Conrad, Louisa, and Max Whitaker
Tammy, Angelina, David, and Shahana Faridi
Bret, Brandon, and Benjamin Boyd*

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PREFACE

The twentieth century saw great advancements in sanitation, control of infectious diseases, childbirth, and trauma care that translated into an unprecedented increase in average lifespan. Today, however, we are facing a health challenge that threatens to reverse this upward trend: our growing epidemic of obesity.

In an insightful article entitled “A Potential Decline in Life Expectancy in the 21st Century,” published in 2005 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, leading aging researchers predicted dire consequences of this epidemic. “Looking out the window, we see a threatening storm—obesity—that will, if unchecked, have a negative effect on life expectancy. Despite widespread knowledge about how to reduce the severity of the problem, observed trends in obesity continue to worsen. These trends threaten to diminish the health and life expectancy of current and future generations.”¹

I have been practicing medicine for more than 30 years and have treated tens of thousands of patients at my clinic in Newport Beach, California, so I am well aware of the burden of diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and other consequences of obesity. However, I am unconvinced that there is “widespread knowledge about how to reduce the severity of the problem.” If there were, we wouldn’t have such a problem. Instead, there are scores of conflicting diet books and programs, each of them claiming to have the solution to obesity—and people looking for help are more confused than ever.

That’s why I wrote the Whitaker Wellness Weight Loss Program. After researching and testing virtually every diet out there, I came to the obvious conclusion that the only way to achieve permanent weight control is to avoid foods that promote fat storage and discourage fat burning and return to the diet our bodies were designed to eat. It’s high time this simple, scientifically

proven, patient-tested concept, which has been buried under mountains of government-sponsored propaganda for decades, is recognized and put into practice. Only then will we stem the rising tide of obesity.

Like most projects, the Whitaker Wellness Weight Loss Program was a group effort. This book could not have been written without the superlative efforts of Peggy Dace, who has collaborated with me on many research, writing, and editing projects over the past 13 years. I would also like to thank Donna Sanford, Whitaker Wellness nutritionist, for her help with menu planning; Idel Kelly, Whitaker Wellness chef, for sharing her recipes; Sharon Barela and Madlen Simms for their research and contributions; Ryann Smith for her editing; and my wife Connie Whitaker for putting up with me. Additional thanks go to David McKenzie, who lit the fuse under this project, and Geoffrey Stone, our excellent editor at Rutledge Hill Press.

INTRODUCTION

If you've gone on diets in the past and lost weight only to regain it, you've picked up the right book. If you've had problems staying on any kind of weight loss regimen because of hunger and "lack of discipline," look no further. If you want to lose weight, lower your cholesterol and triglycerides, keep your blood sugar on an even keel, dramatically reduce your risk of diabetes and heart disease, and look and feel better than you have in years, then the Whitaker Wellness Weight Loss Program is for you.

What makes the Whitaker Wellness Weight Loss Program different from all the other diet books that promise similar results? It addresses the one thing that makes most weight loss programs fail: sticking with it. The average dieter loses his or her resolve in less than two months. Some people quit because they feel hungry all the time. Others get bored by limited food choices or give it all up for their favorite "forbidden" foods. More than a few get sidetracked and lose focus and discipline. Still others become discouraged because they don't see results fast enough.

What sets the Whitaker Wellness Weight Loss Program apart is that it provides you with all the tools you need to overcome hunger and food cravings, stay on track, and see results fast. How do I know? Because I've seen it work for my patients, who have no more or no less willpower or motivation than you.

The only thing you have to bring to the table to ensure success is a true desire to lose weight and an acceptance of the fact that this will require some changes in your life. If you are willing to make a commitment and follow this program, I guarantee that you will achieve your weight loss goals faster than you might anticipate—and keep weight off indefinitely.

Let's get started.

FINALLY, A DIET THAT REALLY WORKS

So you want to lose weight? Join the crowd. At any given time, at least half of all American adults are trying to do the same thing. That tells us a few things. First, we have an enormous weight problem in this country, and second, what we're doing about it just isn't working.

What we're not lacking are books and programs that promise to help you lose weight. This may surprise you, but I can tell you without hesitation that most weight loss diets do work, over the short term anyway—provided that you stick with them. But that's the problem. Most diets set you up for disappointment because they fail to address that most basic of human drives: hunger.

Hunger is a physiological need for food, a physical sensation that drives you to eat. It is controlled by an elaborate network of hormones, neurotransmitters, and other chemical messengers that tell you when to eat and when to stop. Hunger is a merciless taskmaster. Unfortunately, the typical weight loss diet is a prescription for hunger. Inadequate intake of calories or the wrong types of foods stimulate a series of biochemical reactions in the body that cause the brain to cry out, "Feed me!" When you cave in to these signals and eat, it's not because you are weak-willed or lacking in discipline. You are simply succumbing to an essential survival mechanism.

Another drawback of most weight loss programs is that they ignore the way the body stores and uses fat. Everybody knows we have an epidemic of obesity on our hands. Many experts blame it on large portion sizes—we just eat too much. There is some truth to this, but it's not as simple as eating less. Every bit as important as *how much* we're eating is *what* we're eating. Not all

foods affect the body the same way. Some foods, even when eaten in moderation, encourage fat deposition while others actually promote fat burning. If your food selections put you in the fat-storage mode, you can exercise all you want and you're still going to have trouble losing weight.

The good news is that you can control the hunger signals that are the bane of any dieter and rev up fat burning while decreasing fat storage. This, in a nutshell, is the foundation of the Whitaker Wellness Weight Loss Program. But before we delve into the details, let me tell you a little about the evolution of this program—and what it can do for you.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE WHITAKER WELLNESS WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAM

I've been practicing medicine in Orange County, California, since 1979, first in Huntington Beach and for the past 25 years in Newport Beach. It was only after I graduated from medical school that I discovered the healing power of nutrition and exercise—we certainly weren't taught such "frivolous" things in school—and it irrevocably changed the way I practice medicine. I wanted to help people get well, and I knew I couldn't do that within the confines of conventional medicine with its emphasis on drugs and invasive procedures.

I worked for a time at the Pritikin Institute, where I saw firsthand the tremendous therapeutic potential of diet and exercise. Not only did patients shed pounds, but they also shed diseases: heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other serious conditions. When I opened the Whitaker Wellness Institute shortly after that, I based it on the Pritikin model. Patients came for two weeks and stayed in a hotel near the clinic. Under my supervision, they exercised daily, ate a very low-fat diet, took nutritional supplements targeted at their specific health problems, and learned how to implement these lifestyle changes at home. My patients thrived on this program. They lost weight, discontinued drugs they'd been on for years, canceled surgeries, and truly got well.

There was one common criticism about the program, however: It was hard to stay on the diet after returning home. While many people adapted well, a good number of them complained of being hungry all the time and

having a hard time keeping weight off over the long run. I couldn't understand it. Virtually all of America's leading health authorities and medical researchers were promoting a low-fat diet as the mecca of good health and weight control, plus I had filing cabinets full of supporting research. I truly believed that fat was the reason for all our ills from obesity to cancer to heart disease.

I was wrong. While some do very well on a low-fat diet, most people who struggle with weight do not. The reason is simple. If you aren't eating much fat or, by extension, much protein, you've got to be eating lots of something else, and that something else is carbohydrates. Even if you avoid sugars and white flour and eat only "healthy" brown rice; potatoes; and whole grain pasta, cereals, and breads, you are still subjecting yourself to a massive load of carbohydrates, and this, as I will explain in the next chapter, is working against your body's natural weight-control mechanisms.

Once I understood this concept, I began making changes in the Whitaker Wellness diet. I started using healthy fats such as olive oil more liberally. I added more protein from lean sources such as chicken and fish. And I cut back on starchy carbohydrates, offering only less carbohydrate-dense vegetables and fruits. And guess what? Patients loved it. They reported that it was easy to follow, and they lost more weight while continuing to reap all the health benefits of the stricter diet.

Over the years I've continued to make modifications in the diet, and the results just get better and better. In addition to following the latest scientific research, I've also depended on patient feedback to help shape this program. Nearly 40,000 patients have come to the Whitaker Wellness Institute over the past 27 years, and I've learned a lot from them: what works and what doesn't, what foods they like and dislike, and what changes they're willing or unwilling to make. In essence, the Whitaker Wellness Weight Loss diet is the culmination of almost three decades of in-the-trenches, hands-on patient experience.

In addition to the diet, this book also includes an exercise program. While you can lose weight on this dietary regimen even if you don't exercise, exercise makes it a heck of a lot easier. Furthermore, the health benefits of regular exercise are so profound that, as a physician, I would be remiss if I didn't do my best to encourage you to get active.

I've also included something that most programs lack: recommendations for specific foods and nutritional supplements that facilitate weight loss by reducing appetite or bumping up metabolism and increasing fat burning. Although, like exercise, they aren't critical for success, these supplements give many people a much-needed jump start on the track to weight loss.

Finally, I've included all of the tricks of the trade I've taught—and learned from—my patients over the years to help them commit to and stay with a weight loss program. One couple that can testify to the effectiveness of the Whitaker Wellness Weight Loss Program is Ken and Murlene of Valley Springs, California.

Ken and Murlene first came to my clinic in March of 2003. At that time Ken weighed 444 pounds. Prior to coming to Whitaker Wellness, they had tried to get Ken's weight under control without much success. Murlene, who is French and a gourmet cook, realized that Ken's health was more important than the rich cuisine they both adored, and she had modified her recipes. But cutting back on fat didn't make much of a difference.

Obesity wasn't Ken's only problem. This 65-year-old also had diabetes, asthma, and chronic pain; and he was taking 12 prescription drugs. Recognizing that his weight was causing many of his health problems, we started Ken on the Whitaker Wellness Weight Loss diet, along with a comprehensive nutritional supplement regimen and additional therapies targeting his other health concerns. (Because Ken relied on a motorized scooter for mobility, exercise was out of the question initially.) Ken and Murlene stayed in Newport Beach for two weeks while Ken underwent treatment. During that time, they ate meals prepared by our chef and, in lectures by our physicians and professional staff, learned about the causes of their health problems and how to implement solutions and lifestyle changes. At the end of their two-week stay, Ken had lost 25 pounds.

Murlene wasn't in as bad of shape. She only had 20 to 30 extra pounds to conquer. After turning 50 and having a hysterectomy, Murlene had gained almost 30 pounds. She made a pact with her husband to make a real change in their health, which is what prompted them to come to Whitaker Wellness.

They returned home with newfound knowledge and inspiration.

Mourlene realized that weight loss isn't all about reducing fat, and she quickly put the program into practice. For Ken, the improvements he experienced in that short period were just the carrot he needed. Two years later, Ken is a new man. He has lost 169 pounds and discontinued all of his medication. His blood sugar is under control—without drugs. He works out in the gym doing weight training a few times a week, walks a mile or two every day, and does yard and house work. (His scooter was gathering dust, so he sold it on eBay.) Ken now weighs 275 pounds and has no doubt he'll achieve his goal of losing 45 more.

Remarkable as Ken's story is, you may relate better to Mourlene's challenge: At her heaviest, Mourlene weighed 160 pounds. Today, she's down to an impressive 122, and she's kept the weight off. Mourlene stays on track with a daily routine of meditation, breathing exercises, and a workout with her bun and thigh roller. She also works in the yard almost every day and strives to stay active from 5:00 A.M. when she rises until she turns in for the night.

Mourlene and Ken's eating habits have changed dramatically. They eat lots of vegetables, some fruit, and moderate amounts of protein. They rarely eat out and often use protein shakes as meal replacements. Mourlene admits that one of the difficulties she encounters is entertaining dinner guests who still seem to expect the rich French dishes she used to prepare. But she and Ken don't miss them. "This program isn't a sacrifice; it's a part of our lives," she says.

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR YOU

Like Ken and Mourlene, you have a wonderful experience ahead of you. Let's jump ahead a month, six months, a year from now, after you're over the hump of changing old habits and this new lifestyle has become routine for you.

Envision the new you. You'll have shed unwanted pounds and taken inches off your waist and hips. You'll be wearing a smaller clothing size, and with your newly toned muscles, you'll look fabulous. And what you'll see in the mirror is only the tip of the iceberg. You'll feel different as well. You'll be invigorated and full of energy and vitality. You'll be sharper mentally, less

anxious, and more upbeat. You'll be stronger and have more endurance. Even your sleep and sex life will improve!

I can promise all this and more because I've seen it time and again with patients at the Whitaker Wellness Institute. Just three weeks of focused attention on nutrition and exercise—the time it takes to break old habits and instill new ones—can set the stage for a lifetime of better health. That's because as important as the changes in how you look and feel are, more subtle changes are going on in your body. As you lose body fat, gain muscle, and feed your body the nutrients it thrives on, you'll be making dramatic improvements in virtually every aspect of your health.

INCREASED INSULIN SENSITIVITY

Extra weight, particularly if it's in the abdominal area, interferes with your body's ability to use insulin, a hormone we will be talking about a lot in this book. Insulin's job is to usher glucose, fat, and other nutrients into the cells. However, excess body fat causes the cells to lose their sensitivity to insulin's signals. The pancreas responds by releasing even more insulin, resulting in elevated levels of this hormone.

This is called insulin resistance, and it is linked not only with obesity but also with hypertension and abnormalities in cholesterol and triglycerides (fat in your blood). This cluster of conditions is so common that it has a name, metabolic syndrome (it's also called syndrome X), and it dramatically increases your risk of diabetes and heart attack. The Whitaker Wellness Weight Loss Program is as close to a sure cure for insulin resistance and metabolic syndrome as you can get, and as your cells become more sensitive to insulin's signals, you will reap a cascade of health benefits.

DECREASED RISK OF DIABETES

Type 2 diabetes is the end stage of insulin resistance—the cells become so insensitive to insulin that glucose cannot get in and blood sugar levels rise. We are currently experiencing an explosion of diabetes, and it is riding on the coattails of our epidemic of obesity. More than 80 percent of people with diabetes are overweight, and a gain of just 11 to 18 pounds doubles your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Weight loss is also a critical therapy for diabetes, and as your cells

increase their sensitivity to insulin, all of the risk factors associated with diabetes will recede: heart attack and stroke, kidney disease, amputation, and blindness. Treating diabetes has been a specialty of mine for 30 years—I even wrote a book about it, *Reversing Diabetes*. My primary therapies are the diet and exercise program discussed in this book, along with targeted nutritional supplements.

LOWER CHOLESTEROL AND TRIGLYCERIDES

If your cholesterol and/or triglycerides are high, get ready to watch them fall on the Whitaker Wellness Weight Loss Program. One of my patients, Kerry, had exceptionally high blood lipids for years. When I first saw him, his triglycerides were 5,300 (normal is 100), his cholesterol was 490 (normal is less than 200), and his blood sugar was 590 (blood sugar of less than 100 is considered normal). Here is a guy who was headed for serious trouble. I told him to cut the sugar, bread, potatoes, and other starchy foods out of his diet, begin a walking program, and take fish oil capsules and other supplements.

After one month, his triglycerides fell to 764, his cholesterol to 260, and his blood sugar to 189. Three months later, his cholesterol was a respectable 186 and his triglycerides 303. And yes, Kerry achieved these remarkable improvements without Lipitor or any other prescription drug. These are the kinds of results you can expect on this program.

REDUCED BLOOD PRESSURE

High blood pressure and weight go hand in hand. The more body fat you have, the more blood vessels and capillaries you must have to nourish it—every extra pound or two of fat requires the addition of literally miles of extra blood vessels. This increases the resistance on the vessels and contributes to elevation of blood pressure.

A loss of just 10 percent of your current weight is often enough to lower blood pressure and provide tremendous health benefits.

DECREASED RISK OF HEART DISEASE

Lowering your cholesterol, triglycerides, blood pressure, and insulin resistance go a long ways toward guarding against heart disease. But as you lose weight, you'll gain even greater protection. A primary player in

cardiovascular disease is inflammation. Most heart attacks occur when small plaques in the coronary arteries, destabilized by inflammation, rupture and attract a blood clot that blocks blood flow to the heart.

Where do these inflammatory compounds come from? In large part from your fat cells. Fat cells are not just a parking lot for excess calories but are metabolically active, churning out hormones and inflammatory chemicals. Excess body fat, especially in the abdomen, closely correlates with chronic inflammation. As this fat melts away, so do levels of harmful inflammatory compounds.

IMPROVEMENTS IN JOINT PAIN

If you're suffering with arthritis pain, weight loss will dramatically improve your symptoms. When you walk, your hips, knees, and ankles bear three to six times your total weight. This means that if you lose just 10 pounds, an additional 30 to 60 pounds of extra stress will be lifted off your joints.¹

Even if you don't have arthritis, losing weight will decrease your risk of developing it in the future. This is because extra weight hastens the breakdown of cartilage. Obesity is the leading cause of arthritis in women and the second leading cause, after sports injuries, in men—it quadruples risk of arthritis of the knee in women and increases it five-fold in men. Even moderate weight loss decreases strain on weight-bearing joints, improves symptoms, and slows the progress of arthritis.²

PROTECTION AGAINST CANCER

Your risk of cancer will also fall, especially if you are extremely overweight. Experts estimate that excess weight accounts for up to 20 percent of all deaths from cancer. In a 16-year American Cancer Society study of more than 900,000 adults, extreme obesity increased the death rate from cancer by 52 percent in men and 62 percent in women.³

But even moderate weight gain may increase risk. That's because fat cells produce a number of hormones and other substances that may stimulate cancer growth. Maintaining normal weight has been shown to be protective against cancers of the breast, uterus, gallbladder, cervix, ovary, prostate, and colon.

LOWER RISK OF MAJOR DISEASES

As you lose weight, your likelihood of encountering many other health challenges will also diminish. One of them is nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, the leading liver problem in this country, which affects roughly one in four Americans. You'll also be less prone to developing gallstones and gallbladder disease, gout, sleep apnea, and perhaps even Alzheimer's disease. All in all, excess weight is one of our country's leading causes of premature, preventable death—second only to smoking.

In summary, when you combine the protective effects of weight reduction with the proven health-enhancing effects of the lifestyle changes in the Whitaker Wellness Weight Loss Program, you'll be on the road to excellent health.