

Cash and competition motivate weight loss

By ACSH Staff — April 2, 2013

Financial incentives are used by about 67 percent of employers in order to encourage employees to adopt healthier habits. According to a [new study](#) [1], financial incentives may result in greater weight loss in obese employees. Further, group-based incentives had a larger impact on weight loss than individual incentives.

Researchers studied about 100 obese employees BMI between 30 and 40 kg/m² randomized to one of three groups. Individuals in the control group received access to the Weight-control Information Network of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, and were scheduled for monthly weigh-ins. Those in the second group the individual incentive group were given access to this site, and were also told that if they met their monthly weight-loss goal, they would be given \$100 every four weeks for 24 weeks. Subjects in the third group group incentive were divided into teams of five but did not know who else was in their group. Each team was told that they would earn \$500 each month, to be split among all members of the group who had met their weight-loss goal that month.

Those in the the third group the group incentives lost 7 pounds more than those in the individual incentive group and 10 pounds more than the control group after 24 weeks. And that difference was maintained between the group incentive and the control groups 12 weeks after the intervention ended.

ACSH s Dr. Ruth Kava thinks that such studies provide insight into how to help motivate people to lose weight: When health risks aren t enough incentive, perhaps a little cash and competition will help. Given the implications of uncontrolled obesity, we should consider all possibilities.

ACSH s Dr. Josh Bloom wonders about the message of this study. He says, If people can be motivated to lose weight simply by giving them money, then they should be able to do this on their own just as easily. We shouldn't be paying people to do what they ought to do themselves.

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