

## Weight Loss During the Covid-19 Pandemic with a Virtual Habit Change Provider in an Employer Population

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### Background

Obesity has been linked to increased risk of serious complications and the need for costly medical utilization which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> Effective interventions to support weight loss and development of healthy habits during the Covid-19 pandemic are important with the increase of imposed restrictions impacting healthy lifestyles.



Americans gained nearly **2 lb per month** under COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders in 2020.<sup>2,3</sup>

### Objectives

Evaluate the impact of a guided habit change experience for weight loss during the Covid-19 pandemic.

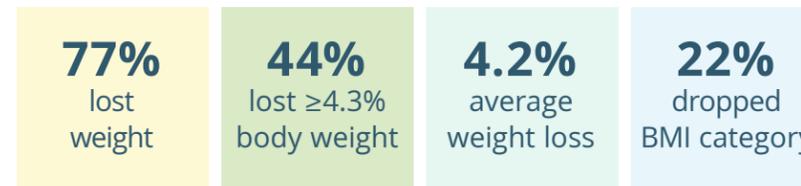
### Methods

This was a retrospective data analysis of participants who were engaged for at least 12 months beginning pre-pandemic. This analysis focused on weight change and was restricted to those participants with a body mass index  $\geq 28$ . The percentage of participants with a  $\geq 4.3\%$  weight reduction after 12 months was assessed. This has been shown to be associated with meaningful reduction in healthcare costs. The average weight loss and the percentage BMI decrease was also assessed.<sup>4</sup>

### Results

1436 participants met the assessment criteria. 52% were female and average age was 46.5( $\pm 10.6$ ). 77% of participants lost weight and 44% of participants had a weight loss of  $\geq 4.3\%$ . The average weight loss was 4.2% ( $p < .0001$ ). 22% of obese participants dropped a BMI category.

#### 12 Month Outcomes



### Experience Description

Participants were given access to a tech-enabled virtual habit change experience. Each experience was designed around participant's health risks, genetics, medical history, motivation, social determinants of health, personal preferences, and goals.

Participants met virtually one-on-one with their Inspirator (health coach) who was assigned to them based on a personality-matching algorithm. In addition to virtual coaching, they received an e-scale, activity tracker, and had access to an interactive app. The interactive app allowed participants to record their goals and achievements, book and cancel coaching sessions and access a library of pre-recorded videos, educational tools and recipes.

When the pandemic began, Newtopia's team of medical and clinical experts developed new content focusing on the pandemic and the stay at home lifestyle. Coaching prioritization shifted to mental health and how to manage stress; there was more focus on at-home meal preparations and home-based activity recommendations. These modifications enabled participants to stay engaged throughout the pandemic.

### Conclusions

Despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, individuals participating in this habit change experience still achieved impactful weight loss.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/obesity-and-covid-19.html>

<sup>2</sup> JAMA Netw Open. 2021;4(3):e212536. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.2536

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.webmd.com/lung/news/20210323/lockdown-weight-gain-study>

<sup>4</sup> [https://journals.lww.com/joem/Fulltext/2015/12000/Reducing\\_Metabolic\\_Syndrome\\_Risk\\_Using\\_a.3.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/joem/Fulltext/2015/12000/Reducing_Metabolic_Syndrome_Risk_Using_a.3.aspx)