

# Why a Spa May Be the Best Solution for Weight Loss

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, two-thirds of adults in America are either obese or overweight, and that statistic doesn't factor in the hundreds of millions of people around the world who are also increasingly overweight. In fact, the quest to lose weight has become an almost universal pursuit - as evidenced by the recent annual survey by Franklin Covey, a global organizational products company. For 2009, weight loss ranked as one of the top three New Year's resolutions people make. **But the survey also found that 75 percent of those people fail on that resolution within the first three months.**

## How a Spa Can Help You Keep Your Resolution to Lose Weight

This is why structured weight loss programs - like those offered by spas - are so critical. While not everyone agrees on which weight loss regimes are best, there is general consensus that losing weight necessitates a multi-faceted approach that includes exercise, nutrition and stress reduction. It also helps to explore the emotional baggage that may be at the root of overeating and, as demonstrated in recent research, learn how to get enough healthy sleep to help hormones stay balanced.



Addressing each of these factors and coming up with a successful formula to lose weight - and keep it off - is no easy task. And it's extremely difficult to accomplish alone. That's one important reason why so many people never accomplish their weight loss goals - and why, for many, a supportive spa program often works best.

In fact, over my 30- year career in the spa industry, I have found that there is one step that people can take which makes the entire weight loss process a lot easier, more fun and greatly improve the odds for success. **Check into a weight loss spa!**

### **How to Choose the Right Spa for Your Goals**

Most 'getaway' spas (especially destination spas which are total immersion spa experiences) are about exercise, diet, stress reduction, mind/body programs and healthy sleep. Many address weight loss directly, offer educational programs, and generally excel at creating a supportive environment.

But with so many spas to choose from, how do you know which ones are tops for helping people lose weight? One resource is the Top 10 Weight Loss Spas in the annual SpaFinder's Readers' Choice Award poll. These are voted on by spa-goers from around the world who have actually experienced programs offered by a wide range of spas. Here are the winners for 2008 (in alphabetical order):

Cal-a-Vie (CA)

Fitness Ridge Resort & Spa (UT)

Grail Springs Health Retreat and Wellness Spa (Canada)

Hilton Head Health (SC)

New Age Health Spa (NY)

New Life Hiking Spa (VT)

The Oaks at Ojai (CA)

Pritikin Longevity Center & Spa (FL)

Rancho La Puerta (Mexico)

Red Mountain Spa (UT)

But before you check in, SpaFinder recommends that you ask a few questions. The answers will help you choose a spa anywhere that can best meet - and maintain! - your weight loss goals.



Does the spa have a dedicated weight loss program? (Best if the answer is yes.) What is the program? (Better if it is a multi-faceted approach.) Are meals portion-controlled or are they buffets where there are no limits? (You will likely be more successful if there is help with portion control.) How many fitness levels are accommodated? (More is better. It's important to be in a group where participants are at the same level, instead of exercising with people who slow you down or push you beyond your limit.) Are there medical professionals on staff? (Better if the answer is yes since high blood pressure, movement limitations, and possible food issues often accompany being overweight.) How much exercise will I be doing every day? (More is not always better as too much can be, well, too much - however it helps to have several movement activities dispersed throughout the day.) Are there classes or lectures that address the underlying causes of being overweight? (Better if there are, since overeating is a complex problem and needs to be addressed at root levels as well as through nutrition and exercise.) Are spa services included in your weight loss program? (Better if, yes. Rewarding yourself with relaxing spa and beauty treatments is part of what makes it easier to adhere to the program.) Will I learn the tools to continue my weight loss at home? (Again, best if, yes. Look for cooking classes, follow up with email newsletters and support groups.)

### **Myths and Misconceptions**

Is a spa frivolous?

I'm often asked, "Isn't it frivolous to go to a spa to lose weight because, after all, how much can I lose in a few days or even a week?" The truth is that weight loss isn't about merely quantifying how many pounds you can drop in a week - it's about a long-term changing of directions. And that you can do in a week - in fact, you can usually do it in a few days.

If by going to a spa you are inspired to begin exercising regularly, eating more healthfully and taking

better care of yourself in general, then the resulting transformation will guide you to your ultimate ideal weight. And that will be worth whatever you paid for time at the spa.

Will I starve?

Many people are afraid they will starve at a spa and be very uncomfortable, but just the opposite is true. Spas are extraordinary at helping people lose weight while at the same time providing a lot of comfort and satisfaction. In fact, I would go so far as to say that the easiest way to lose weight is to check into a good weight loss spa.



Getting away from the stresses in your personal life, and being surrounded by a supportive program that has been designed specifically so that you won't be hungry while you are losing weight - while getting more fit - is a wonderful experience. And any small discomforts are hardly noticeable thanks to all the feel-good activities like massages, facials, whirlpools, fun with new friends and restful sleep.

Will I be embarrassed?

Often people are concerned that they'll feel embarrassed at a spa because they're overweight and other people will be thinner. But let's face it, at a weight loss spa you'll find yourself in the company of others in the same situation. And even if you happen to be the heaviest person there, you're sure to be surrounded by understanding people struggling with the same issue. After about 24 hours, no one is looking at body size, whether or not someone is wearing make-up or how much money you make. Happily, spas are the experts at creating mutually supportive environments where you have a chance to really be you. And that's part of the reason for their ongoing success and popularity for weight loss!

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