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Health & Fitness

Weight Loss for African-American Women: An Eight-Week Guide to Better Health
George Edmond Smith
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“This book is not about dieting. It is about celebrating womanhood. It is about taking care of that very special you. And it is about putting yourself first.” Weight loss requires a combination of factors-changing behaviors and improving health-not just decreasing food intake. The author, an African-American board-certified family practice physician specializing in family medicine, provides “the physical aspects of caring for the self” and “the mental, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social wellness components” needed to lose weight for life.

“One in ten Black women over the age of forty is more than 100 pounds overweight,” states Smith, who is also a professor of family medicine at Hahnemann School of Medicine in Philadelphia. His eight-week program is geared toward Black women’s cultural and eating habits. Stories of four patients-Tawanda, Diane, Rose, and Tameka-introduce women from unique backgrounds who used the program and lost thirty-one to forty-one pounds each, and won improved health. The women share their lives, and supporting each other while changing lifestyles.

The book recommends finding a supportive partner and learning about the African-American diet, weight loss myths, nutrition, meditation, exercise, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, obesity, depression, menopause, osteoporosis, and eating disorders. Sample menu plans, including three meals and two snacks daily, provide the number of calories per meal and total calories. Also enclosed are lists of daily exchanges for starches, fruit, vegetables, dairy, meat or other protein, and fat-plus occasional-use foods like ice cream and French fries.

The in-depth appendix covers illustrated exercises with body areas they target; charts to use for weekly meal plans, daily food diaries, aerobic activity logs, and strength training logs; and healthy grocery lists. Easy-to-make recipes with serving size and nutritional information include the “Creamy Tropical Shake” for breakfast made with oranges, bananas, and grapes; a “Turkey Breast Sandwich” for lunch; and the “Barbecued Chicken Breasts” for dinner.

Rounding out this vast resource are websites, addresses, and phone numbers of resources including minority organizations, African American health resources, state minority health contacts, federal information centers, and regions of the public health service.

The reality of weight change is that loss or gain does not occur subject to one cause and does not occur overnight. Patience, health education, and behavior changes are the only way to decrease weight. Readers who keep this book dog-eared will find success only a page away.