



Fitness and Weight Management Program Reimbursement Request

Tompkins County employees may be reimbursed for fitness facility membership, participation in structured classes such as strength training, yoga or Pilates, or a weight management program, including attendance at meetings. All classes and programs must start after employment with Tompkins County begins, and must be held at a certified facility. All weight management program reimbursements must meet the criteria of the NIDDK publication **Choosing a Safe and Successful Weight-loss Program** (see reverse).

Employees will be reimbursed for **pre-paid, completed, and consecutive** 6 or 12 month membership or participation in a fitness facility – up to \$100 for 6 months; \$200 for 12 months. Employees may also be reimbursed for one half the cost of a weight management program up to \$100 for a 6 month program or \$200 for a 12 month program. If participating in a fitness program, a **Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q)** or equivalent provided by the fitness facility or group fitness instructor must be completed *prior* to the start of this activity/membership. A receipt or statement of payment from the facility must be submitted with the request for reimbursement no later than 90 days after the completion of membership or classes.

I am requesting reimbursement for: () Fitness Program () Weight Management Program (check one)
() 6 months () 12 months (check one)

Section 1: Employee

Name: _____ Department: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Section 2: Group Fitness Activity/Membership/Weight Management Program Covered By This Request

a) Name of the fitness facility, group fitness class or weight management program: _____

b) Location where fitness activity or program was provided: _____

c) Program contact person and phone number: _____

d) Dates of fitness activity/membership or weight management program covered by this request:

- From (mm/dd/yy): _____ To (mm/dd/yy): _____

REIMBURSEMENT REQUESTS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITHIN NINETY (90) DAYS OF THE COMPLETED ACTIVITY.

Section 3: Taxable or Tax Exempt Reimbursement

Whether or not your reimbursement will be considered “taxable income” depends on whether you were advised by your physician to complete the fitness or weight management program as treatment for a specific diagnosis (such as obesity, hypertension, or heart disease). **Basic membership fees for a gym, health club, or spa for general fitness or toning are always taxable, as the IRS has ruled that such fees are a “personal expense” rather than an “exempt medical expense”.** However, if you have been prescribed a weight management or fitness program by your doctor to treat a specific disease (such as obesity, hypertension, or heart disease), please have your doctor complete the section below to apply for a **tax exempt** reimbursement:

a) I hereby certify that _____ (employee name) was advised to enroll in a **Weight Management Program** and/or **Fitness Program** to treat a specific disease (such as obesity, hypertension, or heart disease).

Program Name: _____ Date: _____

Physician’s Signature: _____ Phone: _____

Section 4: Please make sure you can check all of the boxes below before submitting your request.

- I have been a Tompkins County employee during the entire group fitness activity/membership/weight loss program indicated by the dates in Section 2, above.
- If requesting reimbursement for a **Weight Management Program**, I verified that the program meets the criteria of the NIDDK referenced above.
- If requesting reimbursement for a **Fitness Program**, I completed a Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q) or equivalent provided by the fitness facility or group fitness instructor *prior* to the start of this activity/membership.
- The fitness facility or group fitness class had an emergency plan in place to respond to medical emergencies.
- I have already paid for and completed the full 6 or 12 months of the membership covered by this request.
- I completed the program within the last 90 days.
- I have attached official proof of payment issued by the membership/program described in Section 2, above (receipt or statement; photocopies accepted).

Please complete form and send reimbursement request via fax, email, or inter-office mail to Human Resources.

For questions, please contact HR at 607-274-5528.



What should I look for in a weight-loss program?

To reach and stay at a healthy weight over the long term, you must focus on your overall health and lifestyle habits, not just on what you eat. Successful weight-loss programs should promote healthy behaviors that help you lose weight safely, that you can stick with every day, and that help you keep the weight off.

Safe and successful weight-loss programs should include

- behavioral treatment, also called lifestyle counseling, that can teach you how to develop and stick with healthier eating and physical activity habits—for example, keeping food and activity records or journals
- information about getting enough sleep, managing stress, and the benefits and drawbacks of weight-loss medicines
- ongoing feedback, monitoring, and support throughout the program, either in person, by phone, online, or through a combination of these approaches
- slow and steady weight-loss goals—usually 1 to 2 pounds per week (though weight loss may be faster at the start of a program)
- a plan for keeping the weight off, including goal setting, self-checks such as keeping a food journal, and counseling support

The most successful weight-loss programs provide 14 sessions or more of behavioral treatment over at least 6 months—and are led by trained staff.²

Some commercial weight-loss programs have all of these components for a safe and successful weight-loss program. Check for these features in any program you are thinking about trying.

Some weight-loss programs use very low-calorie diets to promote quick weight loss—3 or more pounds a week for several weeks—in people with a lot of excess weight. You should be monitored closely by a health care professional if you are on a very low-calorie diet that provides 800 calories a day or less.

Although these diets may help some people lose a lot of weight quickly—for example, 15 pounds in a month—they may not help people keep the weight off long term. These diets also may have related health risks, the most common being gallstones.³

For people who are overweight or have obesity, experts recommend a beginning weight-loss goal of 5 to 10 percent of your starting weight within 6 months.² If you weigh 200 pounds, that would amount to a loss of 10 pounds, which is 5 percent of starting weight, to 20 pounds, which is 10 percent of starting weight, in 6 months.

Changing your lifestyle isn't easy, but adopting healthy habits that you don't give up after a few weeks or months may help you maintain your weight loss. Read how to change your habits for better health.

What if the program is offered online?

Many weight-loss programs are now being offered partly or completely online and through apps for mobile devices. Researchers are studying how well these programs work on their own or together with in-person programs, especially long term. However, experts suggest that these weight-loss programs should provide the following:

- organized, weekly lessons, offered online or by podcast, and tailored to your personal goals
- support from a qualified staff person to meet your goals
- a plan to track your progress on changing your lifestyle habits, such as healthy eating and physical activity, using tools such as cellphones, activity counters, and online journals
- regular feedback on your goals, progress, and results provided by a counselor through email, phone, or text messages
- the option of social support from a group through bulletin boards, chat rooms, or online meetings

Whether a program is online or in person, you should get as much background as you can before you decide to join. Read more online at: <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/choosing-a-safe-successful-weight-loss-program>