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## Online plan helps doctor lose 50 pounds

■ The program requires aerobic exercise and keeping track of what you eat in a daily diet diary.

By DIANE CHUN  
Sun staff writer

If you'd checked out Dr. Jared Kniffen last January, there'd be no way you'd mistake him for Jared, the svelte spokesman for Subway sandwiches. This Jared was no poster boy for weight loss.

Kniffen, a 69-year-old Gainesville gastroenterologist, often told his patients to eat healthier and exercise more often. But in his case, he now admits, it was, "Do as I say, not as I do."

He rarely followed his own advice, and his health was endangering his life.

"I weighed 250 pounds," Kniffen said. "I jokingly say I've lost 400 pounds in my life, but I'd lose it and gain it, lose it and gain it."

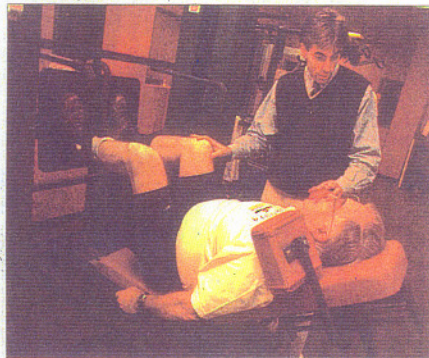


Tips for losing weight. See Page 4A

Kniffen was certainly not alone on the diet merry-go-round. More than half of the adults in the United States are overweight, and the incidence of overweight children and teens is on the rise, according to statistics compiled by the National Institutes of Health.

Tens of millions of Americans are dieting at any given time, spending \$33 billion annually on weight-loss products and services. Yet only 22

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JON M. FLETCHER/The Gainesville Sun

Physical therapist Jeff Gilliam, top, helped Dr. Jared Kniffen lose 50 pounds with a health plan he developed at ReQuest in the Gainesville Health and Fitness Center.

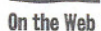
## DIET: Financial contract with friends helped to motivate

Continued from 1A

percent of U.S. adults get the regular physical activity recommended to lose weight and keep it off.

Overweight and suffering from non-insulin dependent diabetes, Kniffen had had three back surgical procedures and a minor stroke.

"My surgeon warned me to lose weight, but I didn't do anything about it," he said. Then he had to have a stent implanted after doctors discovered a blockage after heart bypass surgery.



### On the Web

■ For more information on the Physicians' Choice weight loss program, to determine your body mass index and to take a test that assesses your readiness to tackle a comprehensive weight loss program, visit the Web site, [www.poweightloss.com](http://www.poweightloss.com).

He turned to Jeff Gilliam, a physical therapist who had helped in his rehabilitation after back surgery.

"He knew he was against the wall, no doubt about it," Gilliam

didn't lose some weight, he wouldn't be around much longer."

Gilliam offered to enroll Kniffen in Physicians' Choice, an online weight-loss program he had developed. The program paired exercise and nutrition with motivational modules.

This physician had to think about it before he made the choice.

"Jeff said he'd help me lose 70 pounds, and I said he'd have about as much chance of doing that as turning me into a woman," Kniffen said. "But I realized that everything I'd tried in the past hadn't worked, so I'd better see what this guy was talking about."

Gilliam designed a program that consisted of cardiovascular exercise, resistance training, a diet change and a financial contract involving Kniffen's family, friends and colleagues.

Colleagues in his practice, Digestive Disease Associates, and from North Florida Regional Medical Center contracted to donate money for every pound he lost to one of three charities doing research related to obesity — the American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association or the American Cancer Society.

Gilliam describes the contract concept as "a two-edged sword."

"If he made his 12-week goal, his friends would give him



Dr. Jared Kniffen before the weight-loss program.

missed the goal, and for every pound he was over the goal, he had to give \$10 to the charity himself. It keeps people accountable, and that's an exciting thing," Gilliam said.

"My colleagues were non-verbal reminders of my goals every time I saw them," Kniffen said.

Kniffen began to track what he ate in a daily diet diary, which he e-mailed to Gilliam. He spent 30 minutes a day, six days a week, in aerobic exercise and twice a week did resistance exercises to build muscle and burn fat.



Dr. Jared Kniffen after the weight-loss program.

70-pound mark, but in six months he had lost 50 pounds, reduced his body fat, lowered his cholesterol level and stopped taking twice-a-day insulin injections.

"I sent a note to my colleagues and said they were all off the hook because I hadn't hit my goal, but would they consider paying a dollar for every pound that I missed the mark by?"

Instead, Kniffen's colleagues surprised him with a \$1,000 donation made in his name to the American Heart Association — a salute to his hard work.

### FYI: Ways to win at weight loss

The basic tenet of weight loss — to eat fewer calories than you burn and to stay active — is easy, but like many lifestyle changes, not so easy to do. These tips from the Food and Drug Administration may help.

- Set a realistic weight goal. A physician, dietitian or nutritionist can help you with this. Plan to lose one to two pounds weekly by consuming 300 to 500 fewer calories a day.
- Create an eating plan based on moderation, variety and balance. Limit fat intake to no more than 30 percent of total calories.
- Avoid low-calorie fat diets that exclude whole categories of food such as carbohydrates or proteins.
- Read the food labels when shopping.
- Exercise for a half hour or more on most days, preferably every day.
- Set up a structured exercise program and stick to it. Keep it simple when you're starting out, or starting back.
- Ask your doctor about FDA-approved prescription drugs for obesity, but remember these drugs were not designed for those who are looking to lose a few pounds.
- In evaluating weight-loss programs for help in planning diet and lifestyle changes, choose those that focus on long-term weight management, provide instruction in healthful eating, increasing activity and improving self-esteem, and explain the potential health risks from weight loss. Don't be afraid to ask for evidence of success and a full disclosure of costs.

just a preamble, Kniffen said. "Now I'm in a maintenance situation forever."

"A lot of programs work to get the weight off, but they fail after a couple of years," Gilliam explained. "I ask clients to sign a lifetime behavioral contract, saying that they will stay under a ceiling weight."

Those same colleagues and friends can ask Kniffen to hop on a scale any day, and if he can't make the weight, he has one week to get back to that ceiling. Fall short, and he has to

charity.

"It's a matter of accountability and not just to yourself," Gilliam said. "You have to make a public commitment."

Kniffen likes the view from where he stands today.

"I'm 69 on my way to 70, working rather than retiring," he said. "I'm wearing a different size clothes, I look better and my belly's not sticking out."

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