

STEAL THE 6 PROVEN WEIGHT-LOSS SECRETS
FROM THE LEANEST STATE IN THE NATION!

STATE *of* SLIM

Fix Your **Metabolism** and Drop
20 Pounds in 8 Weeks on the **Colorado Diet**



James O. Hill, PhD, AND Holly R. Wyatt, MD
with Christie Aschwanden

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RODALE

For my wife, Trish, and my sons, Alex and Michael
—JOH

For my father, Charles Larry Thompson
—HRW

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We are so grateful to our patients, our research participants, our fellow Coloradans, and the members of the National Weight Control Registry. We wrote this book to share what we have learned from them. They continue to inspire us to keep learning and to get better at helping people manage their weight.

We have published several research papers describing what we have learned from the National Weight Control Registry. All of this research has been conducted in collaboration with Dr. Rena Wing and her colleagues at Brown University. Rena has been a wonderful friend and colleague for many years and is one of the best researchers in our field.

We have had the opportunity to work and collaborate with many brilliant obesity scientists, and we've learned so much from them. We want to thank the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for funding our research over the past years. Our approach to weight management is science-based, and most of the science of weight regulation was developed with NIH support.

We have received unwavering support from our collaborators and colleagues at the University of Colorado (CU). The CU leadership team, especially Bruce and Marcy Benson, Lilly Marks, Dick Krugman, and Chip Ridgway, have supported and encouraged us to make CU the best place in the world for obesity research. We want to thank our coworkers at the Anschutz Health and Wellness Center who work tirelessly on our research studies and in our wellness clinic. We want to give special thanks to Phillip Anschutz who helped make the Anschutz Health and Wellness Center a reality and a place where people can enroll in state-of-the-art programs for weight management, including the Colorado Diet. He not only believes in wellness, he walks the talk.

A project like this one takes a team and we have a good one. We were fortunate to work with Trisha Calvo at Rodale. She had a vision for this book from the beginning. She is both talented and patient, and the book is much better because of her editing. James Levine, our agent, worked long and hard to make this happen and has provided sound advice to us all along. Christie Aschwanden worked beside us every step of the way. Her skills both in writing and in nutrition helped make the science and the advice more understandable and relevant.

Finally, we are both grateful that we found our way to Colorado and have the opportunity to live the Colorado lifestyle.

From Jim:

Thank you to my wife, Trish, and my sons, Alex and Michael, for your support, encouragement, and understanding of my long hours and many days away from home. And thanks, Alex, for letting me share your story on [this page](#).

From Holly:

Thank you to my parents. My dad instilled my love for science and taught me how to think critically and to ask questions about everything. He is my role model for working hard and living with integrity. Even after his death, he has continued to guide me and show me the importance of following my purpose. I am so grateful and I know I will see him again one day.

And my mother has always been my biggest supporter. She says that raising her “girls” was the best job she could ever have. I would not have gotten through medical school without her sacrifice and support. You are the best, Mom, period!

INTRODUCTION

AS WEIGHT-LOSS RESEARCHERS WHO'VE published hundreds of scientific papers and helped thousands of people lose weight, we've seen diet trends come and go—some of them more than once! Frankly, diets don't work (that's why there are so many of them). So why, then, are we writing a diet book?

Well, *State of Slim* isn't *really* a diet book. Yes, we give you a step-by-step plan for eating and exercising the healthiest way. And yes, you'll lose weight—quickly and safely. But we think you deserve more.

Typical diet books contain quick-fix plans designed to help you fit into your skinny jeans or look thinner for a one-night class reunion. They lure you with promises of dramatic results (drop 15 pounds in 15 days!). And it's true, you can lose weight with any one of these plans—but you probably won't keep it off. Even though you're trying to do all the right things, the pounds inevitably will creep back on, and you won't have a clue how to stop them. You'll probably assume that the weight regain is your fault, feel terrible, and repeat the whole sad process with the next new diet book.

You deserve to know the real deal: Dropping pounds is only part of the picture. You aren't overweight simply because you eat too much and therefore must “diet” to slim down. Lack of movement has played an important role as well. In fact, overeating is just as much a *consequence* of being overweight as it is a cause (we'll explain this startling fact later on). Keeping weight off is a different challenge than losing weight and requires a different strategy. Our approach, which we call the Colorado Diet, tackles both aspects. It is a complete and permanent solution to your weight problem.

By now you must be wondering why we call the *State of Slim* plan the Colorado Diet. We both live in the Denver area, and we run the Anschutz Health and Wellness Center at the University of Colorado. But that's not the only reason. At a time when two-thirds of the American population is overweight or obese, Colorado has bucked the trend: It's the leanest state in the nation. Colorado has an overall obesity rate of 21 percent, and some counties have obesity rates below 15 percent. Compare this with the national average obesity rate of 28 percent, and 35 percent in the heaviest state. How do those statistics help you if you live in New York, Texas, or Iowa? Our Rocky Mountain state is beautiful and inspiring, but it's not magical. Colorado just happens to provide an opportune place and supportive environment for people to live a lean lifestyle naturally. And our work with our patients—as well as our research with people from all 50 states—has shown that you can adopt a Colorado lifestyle no matter where you live.

Neither one of us is originally from Colorado. When our careers brought us here and we each settled into the Rocky Mountain lifestyle, we found ourselves skiing,

hiking, biking, working out, and eating a healthy diet—like many of our colleagues, neighbors, and friends—and feeling healthier. (Holly’s story on [page xvi](#) will likely resonate with many of you.) At the same time, we were both involved in a research project that Jim cofounded. Called the National Weight Control Registry (NWCR), it’s a scientific database of more than 10,000 people from across the country who have dropped at least 30 pounds and maintained the loss for a minimum of a year. The average NWCR participant has lost 70 pounds and kept them off for 6 years. By studying this group, we’ve identified some key strategies that are essential to successful weight loss and maintenance. And as we learned more about what keeps people lean, we realized that our friends, neighbors, and families were intuitively following those key strategies. That’s when it dawned on us: Colorado is the sweet spot where research lab meets real life.

As scientists, we performed many research studies to examine metabolism and obesity. And the top complaint of patients in our weight-loss clinic is “My metabolism isn’t working!” When we first began our research, though, we didn’t find anything wrong with the metabolisms of overweight and obese people; their bodies burned calories at the exact rate they should. But eventually, we discovered that our patients were right. Overweight people burn calories at a normal rate, but their metabolisms are stuck in a fat-storing mode. We’ll explain this more in [Chapter 2](#). For now, know this: You can lose weight with a broken metabolism, but you cannot keep it off.

A Colorado lifestyle creates what we call a Mile-High Metabolism. Denver is known as the Mile-High City because it sits at an elevation of 5,280 feet—exactly a mile above sea level. And with our plan, your metabolism will reach new heights.

Coloradans’ lifestyles keep their metabolisms in tip-top shape—revved up and able to easily burn whatever they eat. It all starts with physical activity. For many Coloradans, it’s not a matter of deciding *whether* to exercise—it’s choosing what to do, when, and with whom.

When you stop moving your body, your metabolism slows, your appetite goes haywire, and you begin eating too much of the wrong kinds of foods. The result? You gain weight and have difficulty losing those extra pounds. You just can’t be healthy and slim without regular physical activity—and we say that with decades of research behind us to prove it. We’ll show you how to incorporate an achievable, enjoyable amount of physical activity into your life—in effect, creating your own Colorado lifestyle—so that your body’s metabolism works with you to stay at a healthy weight.

Of course, what you eat is also important. Colorado cuisine can be described as fresh, flavorful, and seasonal. We eat smarter, not less. And the foods we choose to eat help keep our metabolisms revved instead of bringing it to a near stop.

In Colorado, when friends get together, they’re more likely to meet up for a hike, a bike ride, or a day on the slopes than they are to go out to a restaurant together. Certainly, exercising is easier when everyone you know is doing it and you have lots of options year-round. But it’s not just about living in the right location. It’s about attitude and approach. No matter where you live, we’ll show you how to tweak your physical and social environments and develop healthy routines and rituals so that it becomes easy to create and maintain this lifestyle forever.



HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Jim's Story

I spent my childhood in a small town in Tennessee before going off to college and then graduate school. I've been studying obesity and weight loss since 1981. The first research I ever published showed that if you give rats a high-fat diet, they get fatter than if you feed them a low-fat diet. The same study also revealed that rats who exercise don't get as fat as the other rats, even if they gobble fatty food. I wanted to know if the same things happened in humans (they do), so in the late 1980s I began conducting weight-loss studies with people. In my research, I have found that there are many ways to lose weight but that most people who lose it are not able to keep it off. It seemed to me that for a weight-loss program to be effective, it has to work for both losing weight *and* keeping it off.

One evening in 1993, while attending a research conference, I went out for a drink with Dr. Rena Wing, a psychologist now at Brown University and one of the leading weight-loss researchers in the world. As we sat at the bar and nursed our drinks, our conversation turned to a curious fact. The media at the time made it sound as if no one ever managed to lose weight and keep it off. Scientists were so busy studying the people who failed that no one had bothered to look at the people who were succeeding, to figure out how they did it. It was a eureka moment. We looked at each other and realized that we'd stumbled upon something *big*. We decided then and there that we would find people who'd successfully slimmed down and discover their strategies and secrets. That evening, the National Weight Control Registry (NWCR) was born.

In the 18 years since we launched it, the NWCR has become a primary source of information about how successful weight-loss maintainers behave. We now have more than 10,000 people in the registry, all of whom have kept off at least 30 pounds for a minimum of 1 year. The average person in the NWCR has lost around 70 pounds and kept it off for about 6 years. These stories of triumph have taught us important, and sometimes surprising, lessons about what it takes to succeed.

In 1992, I moved to the University of Colorado to develop the world's premier research group studying nutrition, weight management, and physical activity. Our group has conducted many research studies aimed at better understanding how to lose weight and keep it off. We knew that Colorado is America's leanest state, but it's only in recent years that Holly Wyatt and I realized that a few crucial lifestyle factors explain why and how so many Coloradans stay slender. This was my second big eureka moment. I recognized these key factors right away, because I'd seen them before. What now seems obvious came as an epiphany—participants in the NWCR live like Coloradans. And that's exciting, because people in the NWCR live all over the country. Colorado made lean living famous, but participants in the NWCR prove that you can adopt the Colorado lifestyle *anywhere*.



HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Holly's Story

Growing up in Houston, I was always a little thicker (okay, fatter) than the other kids. I was an A student but lacked even an ounce of natural athletic talent. I hated PE class. The annual Presidential Physical Fitness Test reduced me to tears every time. For the life of me, I could not master the bar hang. I never

passed the test. Despite my lack of natural ability, I tried out for the drill team during my freshman year of high school. I struggled to learn the dance moves, but I made the team. Then came the dreaded weekly weigh-ins. Every Friday, I was required to step on the scale. If the number read 133 or less, I was allowed on the field to perform with the team. If the scale hit 134, I was relegated to the sidelines. I started fixating on my weight and wondering why the other girls on the dance squad could eat so much more pizza and candy than I could without worrying about weigh-in time.

During my premed studies at the University of Texas, I stopped dancing and gained the fabled “freshman 15.” My weight continued to climb over the next 4 years. When I got to medical school at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, I started experimenting with different diets. The demanding hours of residency left me no time for exercise, and my weight proceeded to fluctuate up and down. With each new diet, the outcome was the same: I’d lose weight, but it always came back.

I continued bouncing from one diet to the next during my residency in internal medicine at the University of Colorado. One day, my attending physician spied me eating four hard-boiled eggs after my rounds. He asked me what I was doing, and I explained that I was on one of the high-protein diets popular at the time. He told me I was going to rot my kidneys and suggested I talk to an endocrinologist who studied obesity. His advice that day began a cascade of events that changed my career path. We didn’t learn about obesity in medical school, and until then, I’d never realized that metabolism and obesity were things I could specialize in and study scientifically.

Against the advice of some of my advisors (who insisted I needed to study under a physician, not a PhD scientist), I selected Dr. Jim Hill as my research mentor. Jim had recently started the NWCR, and I recognized immediately that the registry would provide the perfect resource for testing ideas and strategies for weight loss. Jim shared everything he knew and taught me the nuts and bolts of how to do research. That was more than 15 years ago, and we’ve been collaborators ever since.

Jim has shaped my thinking on weight loss, but some of my most important insights have come from my patients and my own experiences as a serial dieter. Early in my practice, I noted that many people who came to my obesity clinic insisted that something was wrong with their metabolisms—they couldn’t eat the same things their spouse or sister or best friend could without gaining weight. Initially, I dismissed their stories. The science at that time didn’t offer any evidence to back up the idea that their metabolisms were faulty. In fact, one of the first studies I did with Jim showed that people in the NWCR had perfectly normal metabolisms. But our research since then has proved those frustrated dieters correct. Our obese patients *do* have metabolisms that are stuck in a fat-storage mode, and losing weight alone won’t fix them. Because metabolism drops along with the pounds, people who have been obese have to work much harder than normal-weight people to prevent weight gain. That’s the discouraging news, but we’ve found good news, too. The fact that people in the NWCR had normal metabolisms wasn’t proof that their metabolisms were never broken; instead, it was evidence that these successful dieters had managed to fix the problems that obesity had inflicted on their metabolisms. Our research has not only proved that it’s possible to repair a broken metabolism, but it showed us how. I’m one of the “easy gainers” we describe in [Chapter 2](#), but the science I’ve learned working with Jim showed me how to end my weight woes for good. Now we’re sharing what we have learned with you.

To help you achieve a Mile-High Metabolism, we first give you an understanding of the skills you need to keep your weight off. Most diets aim to stop bad habits. Ours focuses on instilling good ones. The difference may seem subtle, but our research suggests that it’s anything but.

Remember how we said that losing weight requires a different approach than maintaining that loss? While you are losing weight with the Colorado Diet, you will be preparing yourself for long-term success even before you start—something no other plan does for you. There are three phases. Phase 1 will *reignite* your fat burners so you lose weight quickly—typically 8 to 10 pounds. Phase 2 will *rebuild* your metabolism. You’ll continue to drop pounds and strengthen your metabolism while your diet variety increases. In phase 3, you’ll *reinforce* your metabolism by finding a pattern of

physical activity that keeps your Mile-High Metabolism stoked and fueled by a smart, healthy, satisfying diet. You'll now be ready to live the Colorado lifestyle we outline in [Chapter 9](#)—forever.

We're tired of watching people succeed in losing weight, only to regain it all within a few months. We're tired of seeing people sentenced to a life of food restriction and deprivation. As scientists and researchers, we haven't just theorized about the right weight-loss strategies, we've tested them in our clinic to see if they really work—and they do. Isn't it time to not just lose weight but fix your metabolism so you can join the ranks of those who have succeeded?

What Makes Colorado Special?

CHAPTER 1

WE'RE FREQUENTLY ASKED BY the media and by people we meet at parties why America is getting so fat. Is it because we spend too much time sitting in front of the TV? Is it because we drink those huge sugary soft drinks or that junk food advertising is often geared toward kids? Everyone has an opinion: Healthy food is too expensive. Schools are the problem, since most did away with recess and serve unhealthy food. Our portion sizes are too big, and we're eating too many wheat-based products. The list is endless. People want to blame someone or one specific thing—and everyone wants a simple solution.

There's no doubt that overweight and obesity are huge health problems in our country. Americans have been gaining weight year after year since the early 1980s. In fact, we published a study in *Science* in 2003 showing that the average weight gain in adults is about 2 pounds per year. This may not seem like a lot, but it adds up to 20 extra pounds in a decade!

What has caused this increase in weight gain? The American lifestyle has changed so much in the past 30 years—nearly everything about the places we live, work, and play is different—that it's impossible to assign blame to any one, two, or even three things. More important, though, we don't believe that “Why is America getting so fat?” is the right question. There *are* people who are lean and healthy. Some of them have always been this way; others have managed to lose weight and keep it off for a very long time. We've been asking, “How do these people do it?” With the Colorado Diet, our focus is on what people have done right.

Colorado is a perfect learning laboratory in which to study what's effective and what isn't for weight loss because there are many, many people here doing it right. While the rest of the nation has been packing on the pounds, Coloradans have avoided the high rates of obesity seen elsewhere. The state has the lowest obesity prevalence in the nation, about 26 percent below the national average. However, not everyone in Colorado is lean—just being a Coloradan doesn't give you immunity against the factors that contribute to obesity. You have to live the Colorado lifestyle actively.

In studying the Colorado lifestyle, we discovered six key factors that make healthy living easy and are necessary for developing a Mile-High Metabolism (we describe this in greater detail in [Chapter 2](#)). We think they explain why Coloradans are the leanest people in the nation. What's more, in comparing the habits of lean Coloradans to those of the participants in the National Weight Control Registry (NWCR), we determined that you don't need be a Colorado resident to adopt this lifestyle. Those people live across the country, proving you can be a weight-loss success story anywhere. In the chapters that follow, we'll go into greater detail about each one of the factors and show you how to incorporate them into your daily life. But for now, we wanted to give you an overview.

1 / Be Active Every Day

A few years ago, we worked with Harris Polls to research the walking habits of people across the United States and published the results in the journal *Medicine and Science*

in Sports and Exercise. Participants wore pedometers to count the number of steps they took each day. Turns out that the national average was about 5,500 steps (about 2 to 2½ miles), but Coloradans took 1,000 additional steps. We weren't surprised to find that obesity rates were correlated to the number of steps taken. In Arkansas and Tennessee, where obesity rates are among the highest in the country, residents took only 4,500 steps per day.

There's no getting around it—to stay lean, you must be consistently active. Without regular movement, your metabolism becomes slow, sluggish, and inflexible. And an inflexible metabolism makes weight gain inevitable and lasting weight loss next to impossible. Whether it's a walk with the dog, a hike with a friend, a bike ride, or a workout at the gym, movement is a priority in Colorado, not another dreaded task on the to-do list. Some of us get up early, others fit it in between obligations, but the key is we always find a way.

If this feels foreign and seems daunting to you now, don't despair. In [Chapter 4](#), we help you discover the joy of movement and show you how to make it part of your life.

2 / Fuel Up on Real Food

With all that activity, Coloradans love to eat, but we're selective about our food. We look for fresh and local fare, sustainably grown and harvested, where possible. Just about every neighborhood has a farmers' market, and health and organic food stores are very popular, too. (In fact, several major health food chains originated in Colorado.) The majority of our calories come from minimally processed foods that deliver the most flavor and nutrition so our bodies perform at their best. We don't waste our calories on foods with low nutritional value, although we do love our occasional indulgences.

A passion for adventure and new experiences is common here, and food is no exception. Many Coloradans identify as “foodies” and love to cook and seek out inventive restaurants that serve fresh, delicious meals. At restaurants and at home, the emphasis is on quality, not quantity. A healthy-size portion of a great-tasting dish is better than a huge serving of fare that's filled with refined carbohydrates, fat, and sodium—even if that big portion costs less money.

Our friends Debbie and Tim exemplify the Colorado Diet philosophy we discuss in [Chapter 5](#). They love to cook, and even though they live in downtown Denver, they grow their own vegetables in the neighborhood community garden. On a typical Sunday, they might walk or bike to the grocery stores in their neighborhood to pick up a few ingredients for dinner. Debbie prefers making simple meals with fresh ingredients. One of their favorite dinners is sautéed vegetables and herbs tossed with pasta and topped with a little Parmesan cheese—it's tasty, and Debbie can put it together in just a few minutes after work. The couple joined a local farm share program that provides them with a box of fresh, locally produced foods each week. They are both lean and active and readily admit that a major reason they are active is to be able to enjoy the food they love.

3 / Create Your Own Healthy Environment

Colorado is famous for its beautiful scenery and ample opportunities for outdoor recreation. Active people are drawn to our state because of our weather (more than 300

days of sunshine a year), mountains, walking and biking trails, and lots of parks and open spaces. It's hard to stay inside. Of course, it's easier to be active when you're in this kind of environment.

But the typical Coloradan doesn't hike a tall peak before breakfast every day—or even once a month. It's our communities and immediate surroundings—the plethora of parks, the bike paths in our neighborhoods, and our friendly walking groups—that provide an important nudge for healthy living.

And if you're looking for someone to join you on a hike or a bike ride, you don't have to look far. In Colorado, you're likely to rub elbows with a triathlete or trail runner or hiker at a movie, party, or neighborhood event. Your neighbor may be the local running club coach or the organizer of a local charity walk. It seems like everyone owns a bike and a dog. It's not uncommon to begin conversations by talking about the last race you walked or ran rather than what you do for a living. These interactions make living an active lifestyle the norm. This “social circle effect” is exemplified by research done at Harvard University that found that people in the same social network (i.e., groups of friends) tended to have similar body mass indices (body mass index is a measure of obesity). If you're surrounded by friends and family who are overweight, you're more likely to be overweight. Now, this doesn't mean that obesity is contagious; rather it's just that you're likely to engage in the same eating and physical activity patterns as the people you spend most of your time with. And it goes both ways—surround yourself with active people and you become more active, too.

4 / Stay True to Your Purpose

We all have an inner purpose (what we want to accomplish with our lives), but you may not have ever connected your purpose with weight-loss success. Consider this: Is the way you are living your life consistent with what you want to achieve? For Coloradans, being in good shape physically gives them the energy and confidence to do the things that are most important to them, whether it's about providing for family, achieving professional success, or pursuing what they've always wanted to do in retirement. If you recognize how losing weight and keeping it off will help you better reach your goals in life, you will have a powerful motivator to succeed. Making that connection is what spurs you to get up early to hit the gym—even if it's icy cold outside—or gives you the willpower to pass on the second portion at dinner. Living healthfully then becomes a key value in your life and provides motivation for everything you do—and that makes it much more likely that you will enjoy the Colorado lifestyle. Finding your purpose and connecting it to your weight loss goals is an essential factor for success. It's part of the Colorado mind-set we discuss in [Chapter 3](#).

5 / Believe You Can Succeed

During your weight-loss journey, you will face many challenges and small setbacks. Dealing with them in a way that doesn't derail your plan requires keeping a positive mind-set. Your mental outlook can determine how effective you are in making permanent changes in your life. If you believe you can't do something, you probably won't. For you to succeed in losing weight and keeping it off, you have to have faith in

your power to change and not get caught up in thinking you're a victim and have no control over the things you perceive as barriers to success. It sounds simplistic, but the idea that having a positive attitude can help you achieve amazing results is backed by science. Research psychologist Barbara Fredrickson, PhD, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a leader in the field of positive psychology, has shown that cultivating a positive mind-set can enhance relationships, improve work performance, reduce depression, and contribute to better health. In general, Coloradans have an upbeat attitude. It's not that everyone is running around happy all the time. It's more a sensibility that you are responsible for your own happiness. Instead of saying, "I'll believe it when I see it," Coloradans tend to have the mind-set that if you believe it, you will see it. (Chapter 3 discusses this concept in greater detail.)

It's our experience that people who choose to see a lifestyle change in positive terms do much better than those who don't. Consider Melissa, who came to our weight-loss clinic with a negative mind-set. She was constantly talking about all the foods she couldn't eat on her diet plan. She bemoaned the absence of a chocolate dough-nut every morning and complained that Sunday football was just not the same without chicken wings, pizza, and her favorite cold beer. She *had* to exercise every day, and that meant getting up earlier—and she hated getting up earlier. She was losing weight but struggling and even told us we were making her life miserable. You could feel the negative energy when you were in the room with her.

To turn things around, we made it a priority to get her to concentrate on what she liked about her new lifestyle. Each time we met, we asked her to tell us two things she really enjoyed that week and two things she was grateful for. Over time, her mind-set shifted from feeling like a victim to feeling empowered by her ability to create a new way of living. She began to appreciate the opportunities and not chafe against the requirements of her new lifestyle. Melissa not only lost 40 pounds but has kept them off for over a year. We even overheard her telling a new patient that you have the power to make this a great experience or a terrible one—it's your choice.



PARACHUTING INTO WELLNESS

In September 2011, our colleague John Peters, PhD, moved to Denver from Cincinnati to join our group at the Anschutz Health and Wellness Center. He didn't come here seeking to lose weight. Instead, it happened accidentally. We'll let him explain.

I'd visited Colorado many times over the years and always felt drawn to its natural beauty—the Rocky Mountains, the intense sunlight, and the infinite blue sky. When I decided to move here from Ohio, I felt as if I'd literally parachuted into wellness.

One of the first things I noticed in Colorado was the bicycles—they were everywhere! I've always been a cyclist, but until I relocated to Denver, I had to put my bike on the car roof and drive somewhere to ride. Now, in my neighborhood, I'm only a half mile from the High Line Canal bike trail. I hop on my bike at home and ride to the trailhead. There I can connect to a large network of trails that can take me practically anywhere I want to go!

When I first moved in, I assumed my neighborhood was some sort of planned fitness community. People were out walking at all times of the day and night. But eventually, I realized that all this walking is perfectly normal in Colorado—whether there’s a foot of snow on the ground or it is 100 degrees outside, people are outside doing something active. A park across the street from my home has a 2-mile-long trail around it. The first month that I moved in, I signed up for a 5-K in my neighborhood park in hopes of meeting some new people. In a single weekend, I made connections with an entire group of people I could meet up with for outdoor activities.

My eating habits changed, too. My neighborhood has a farmers’ market about 2 blocks away and a natural food store a few miles away, and both of them are on my Saturday grocery route. Surrounded by healthy food, it was much easier to eat well, no willpower required.

Before I knew it, I’d dropped 20 pounds without even trying. And it was all due to the new lifestyle I’d adopted accidentally as my surroundings reshaped my habits. I hadn’t gone on a diet, but my weight dipped to exactly what it was when I got married 35 years ago! Thank goodness I gave away the bell bottoms I had back then, otherwise I’d be tempted to wear them. My only regret is that I didn’t do this sooner—there’s nothing I’m doing now that I couldn’t have done back in Ohio.

6 / Make Healthy Living Fun

If you’re looking for the Colorado secret, this is it. Coloradans don’t eat well and live an active lifestyle to stay lean or even to boost their health; they do it because it’s pleasurable. Over the years, we’ve asked hundreds of Coloradans why physical activity and healthy eating are important to them, and their answers are always the same. They enjoy living this way.

This is where the Colorado Diet departs from most diet plans. Our program isn’t about deprivation. Other diets instruct you on ways to live on less food, but the Colorado Diet takes a different approach. We want you to feed your body wholesome, delicious foods that provide optimal fuel for physical activity and optimal flavor for satisfaction. You’ll be amazed at how much you can eat with a Mile-High Metabolism and still stay lean.

We’ve seen other diet experts urge people to become vigilant about their diet and physical activity program, but Coloradans (and people in the NWCR) have taught us that this is a backward approach. Yes, people who succeed at weight loss and healthy living *do* spend a lot of time thinking about healthy eating and physical activity. Yet it’s not from a place of anxiety or a desire to be “good.” Rather, they relish and look forward to these things. The key to success is savoring this lifestyle and doing it in a way that brings you happiness rather than a feeling of hardship. We know this is possible, because we’ve seen it in our friends, neighbors, and colleagues and in people across the country who have succeeded in losing weight and keeping it off.

Sure, you’ll have to restrict your calories temporarily to drop pounds, but if you adopt the Colorado lifestyle, this will be a short-term fix, not a forever reality. Get the weight off and adjust your metabolism, and you can live in a healthy, enjoyable way and stay satisfied and slim. You can even have indulgence meals where anything you want is on the table. However, your idea of what’s indulgent might change. We’ve found that over time, people lose the desire for things they once thought they could never live without. Yes, they actually learn to like and prefer healthier foods.

By the time you’ve completed the Colorado Diet, we’re confident that you will feel this way, too. The steps outlined in the chapters that follow will help you reach your weight goal gradually, without ever feeling deprived. By the end, you may be surprised to find that our Colorado plan no longer feels like a diet but is simply your

new favorite way of living.

Ours isn't the first plan to promise permanent weight loss. But how many plans can back up those claims with results from research involving thousands of real people? Our claims are based on the achievements of participants in the NWCR across the country, the patients in our weight-loss clinic, and the residents of Colorado who are lean and living the lifestyle we will help you adopt. The Colorado Diet works—we see the evidence of its success every day.

The Mile-High Metabolism
