Go Online To Trim Your Waistline

(NAPSA)—According to a recent Pew Internet & American Life Project report, 80 percent of adult Internet users—nearly half the U.S. population—have researched health information online. Among the most commonly researched health topics are diet and nutrition. In fact, when you enter the word "diet" into any search engine, you will get between 35 and 50 million results.

The Internet is a valuable resource, but the volume of information it introduces can be overwhelming. How can consumers be sure the weight-loss information they find on the Internet will help them lose weight and keep it off in a healthy way?

"It is critical to conduct thorough research when screening weight-management programs, and the Internet is a great place to start," says Leslie Fink, M.S., R.D., a nutritionist at WeightWatchers.com. "Many diet companies have their own Web sites with basic information about their plans. And if you sift through search engine results, you're likely to find reviews of popular diets from other sources and from people who actually followed the diet."

When screening weight-loss plans online, Fink offers the following tips:

• **Make sure you're dealing with a reputable weight-loss company.** Its site should offer free information about its plan and an online tour so you know what you're getting for your money.

• **Choose a healthy weight-loss plan.** Find a weight-loss plan that encourages eating a wide variety of healthy foods; suggests physical activity; fosters new behaviors with healthy attitudes around eating; and provides tools that help

A trimmer waist can be at your fingertips when you look online for a good diet plan.

you stick with the weight-loss approach.

• **Read the site's privacy policy.** Be sure the personal information you supply will be kept confidential and not sold to third-party vendors. Check that ongoing communications from the site will only be sent to you with your authorization. Verify that an industry watchdog, such as TRUSTe or BBBOnline, certifies the site's privacy policy.

• **Realistic goals.** Beware of weight-loss plans that promise quick fixes and unrealistic results. Any credible weight-loss plan sets an initial weight-loss goal of not more than 10 percent of your current body weight, and a rate of weight loss that is not more than an average of two pounds per week.

• **Talk to your doctor.** It's important to discuss with your doctor how your personal health might impact your choice of weight-loss plans. Your doctor can help ensure you pick a healthy way to lose weight.

For free articles and links to reports and studies on the science of weight loss, visit http://www.weightwatchers.com/science.