

# suburbanlife

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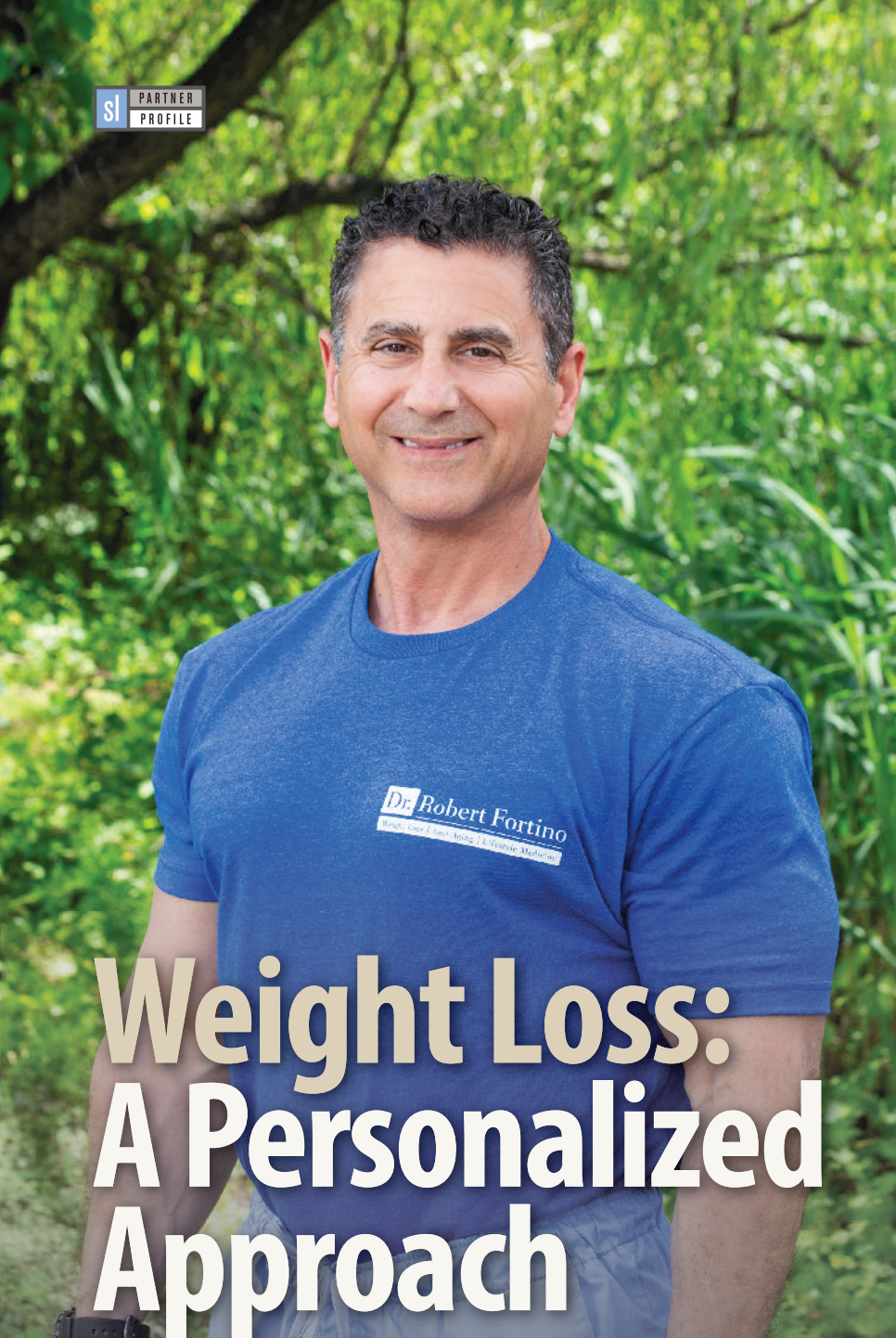


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**Dr. Robert Fortino**  
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# Weight Loss: A Personalized Approach

Known as the “Philly Diet Doc,” **Dr. Robert Fortino** takes a deeply personal approach to helping patients find their purpose, lose weight, and achieve better overall health.

by **Bill Donahue** | photos by **Alison Dunlap**

**R**obert Fortino, D.O., has been a picture of good health since his formative years. A gymnast in high school and a competitive power lifter in college, he found that doing the work needed to excel in those athletic disciplines strengthened his mind as well as his body.

Today, at 60, Dr. Fortino has the lean and muscular body of a much younger man, but his disciplined approach has done much more than hone his physique; he sees physical fitness as a form of preventative medicine and a pathway to boundless energy.

“Physical fitness is a cornerstone of general health and the best way to stay out of the hospital; it helps you repel disease,” he says. “Moving your body with any form of exercise helps you age strong and not frail. Being physically strong requires mindset, focus, and consistency. Exercise is the cornerstone of the fountain of youth.”

Known by his Instagram and TikTok handle, “Philly Diet Doc,” Dr. Fortino is board certified in internal medicine and has become one of the Philadelphia area’s most in-demand specialists for weight management, anti-aging, and lifestyle medicine. At his two offices in South Philadelphia and Turnersville, New Jersey, Dr. Fortino takes a multifaceted and deeply personal approach to helping patients discover the path to better health.

When he meets with a new patient, he spends a considerable amount of time assessing their current health, discussing their eating habits and their lifestyle, and asking direct questions about their goals. Most people describe their goal as “I just want to lose weight,” though he encourages them to focus on creating a structure and foundation that leads to continued success.

“The real goal is not the weight lost; it is the structure that someone built to achieve success and be consistent,” he says. “Once someone loses 10 pounds or 20 pounds, what is next? How do you go further? How do you keep the weight off?”

## Doing the Work

While Dr. Fortino provides an array of medically supervised weight-loss therapies, his “Three Rules” serve as the foundation for every patient: 1. Eat What God Put on This Earth; 2. Keep Your Plate Simple; 3. Exercise.

By following these simple rules, a person will be able to remove all manufactured foods, processed sugars, and salts from their diet, and understand that food should heal and protect the body.

Dr. Fortino cites his own father, age 91, who still fits in his U.S. Army uniform from the Korean War. The elder Fortino’s secret: walking every day, eating what God put on this earth, and keeping his plate simple; he does not consume any foods that are manufactured.

Dr. Fortino works with patients “from 18 to 85,” though he characterizes his average weight-loss patient as a woman in her mid-30s to mid-40s. A treatment plan will likely include some or all of the following, depending on the specific patient: appropriate food education; vitamins and supplements; blood work and EKGs; ongoing monitoring and mainte-





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nance; and, of course, regular exercise instruction.

"Probably 90 percent of the people who come to see me are taking cholesterol and blood pressure medication," Dr. Fortino adds. "It appears we are treating numbers instead of actual diseases. I want to treat the person, not the symptom or the number. I believe if I can teach someone the benefits of proper food habits and exercise, that person will never need medication ever."

Dr. Fortino offers semaglutide to help people achieve success and start a journey into better health. Semaglutide, which is the generic version of Ozempic and Wegovy, is an FDA-approved medication considered safe to use to help people change eating patterns and remove the "food noise" from their head. Semaglutide helps the brain think differently about sugar. It also helps the stomach feel fuller and helps to control insulin sensitivity. This drug has been used for glycemic control since the early 2000s. Now, semaglutide is being studied for other medical issues, such as heart disease and cancer.

Dr. Fortino is quick to note, however, that even the most effective medications represent only one part of a comprehensive solution. There is "work behind the medication," which means that a person must adjust their lifestyle and remove the habits that led to their weight gain, and then create new behaviors that will help them lose weight and inches around the belly.

### Breaking Down, Building Up

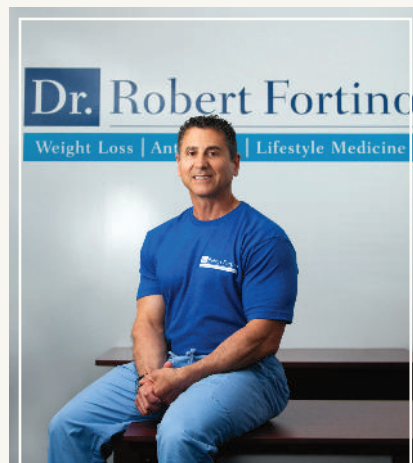
While he is too modest to say so himself, Dr. Fortino is unique among his peers. He sees himself as an educator, a teller

of hard truths, and a constant companion who is devoted to helping patients succeed where they may have failed in the past. He wants patients to know their journey is not theirs alone. He welcomes patients to call him, email him, and text him when needed, even if it is to share a small win or discuss a personal struggle.

"Working on yourself is the hardest work you'll ever do," he says. "My job is to guide you to achieve goals. This is one of the most personal aspects of medicine—it is an opportunity to touch the person mentally, physically, and spiritually. I want every patient to succeed. Before I begin an interview with a new patient, I tell them that if they understand what I am going to teach them, they will never need me again."

"I had one patient who was over 300 pounds when I met her," he continues. "She did everything I taught her and lost over half her body weight. She stopped coming to the office. One day I received a picture of her standing in one leg of her oversized blue jeans. ... They're all meaningful, but patients like her really stick with you because of how much their lives change."

In addition to his work as a weight-management specialist, Dr. Fortino is a flight surgeon with the 177th Fighter Wing in the USAF New Jersey Air National Guard. He holds the rank of lieutenant colonel, and his main job is the Chief of Aerospace Medicine. As the physician for military members, he provides medical care to airmen who work with hazards not found in the average workplace. The care he provides helps to prevent injury and disease as these brave men and women perform their jobs every day.



**Working on yourself  
is the hardest work  
you'll ever do."**

— Robert Fortino, D.O.,  
the "Philly Diet Doc"

"It is important that these warriors are healthy and can perform their job effectively to continue to protect this great nation," Dr. Fortino says. "To become a member of the military, one must be willing to be broken down and re-built up. You must remove all bad habits and develop and maintain habits that keep you strong so you can perform the tasks necessary to defend this country."

"I take the same approach in my practice," he continues. "I must help you remove the habits that ultimately brought you to my office, and show you how to create and maintain success that you worked for." ■



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