

WEIGHT

PAID FOR POUNDS

Losing weight can be lucrative. A number of companies, supported by corporate and government entities, are paying rewards to people who successfully diet.

HealthyWage.com is among those companies. It pays bounties to dieters who lose 10 percent of their body weight, slim down to a "normal" body mass index or team up with friends to compete against other dieters. The cost to join the 10 percent challenge is \$100; if you're successful, you double your money and get \$200. Other challenges pay even more money — up to \$10,000.

Sounds good, right? The trouble is that some sites aren't legit. HealthyWage says to watch for these red flags:

- **Lack of weight verification.** If you're winning money or prizes for weight loss, someone has to confirm that you're losing pounds. If there's no verification or audit process from a third party, odds are you're being scammed.

- **Requirement to purchase a third-party product.** If you have to buy pills, food, clothing or other products, odds are you're being rooked.

- **Inaccessible service or support.** You should be able to reach someone by phone or email. If you can't, investigate or go elsewhere.

- **No social media following.** These days, legitimate businesses have a Facebook or Twitter presence. Poll your online friends to see if they've ever done business with the company.

- **Little or no search results.** Again, if a company is paying out cash for pounds, people will be talking about it.

- **No coverage in popular media.** Real companies get mentioned in legitimate news sources, such as newspapers, magazines and TV.

