

# Weight-loss Medications

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## What are weight-loss medications?

Weight-loss medications are prescriptions that help people lose weight. They are usually only prescribed for people with a higher risk of medical problems due to their weight. One part of your risk is **body mass index (BMI)**. Body mass index describes your weight in comparison to your height. You may have a higher risk of health problems if you have a BMI of:

- 30 or higher
- 27 or higher AND have an obesity-related condition such as high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, or high cholesterol

## How do weight-loss medications work?

There are two main types of weight-loss medication:

- 1 Appetite suppressants** keep you from feeling hungry, or make you feel full.
- 2 Lipase [LIE-pays] inhibitors** keep your body from taking in about one-third of the fat from the food you eat. The fat that your body does not take in passes out of your body as waste.

Weight-loss medications only work well when they are used as part of a program that includes healthy eating and regular physical activity. These activities will also be needed to help you keep the weight off after you stop taking the medication.



Some people who use weight-loss medications will lose more weight than others. The average amount of weight loss is about 8 pounds over 12 months.

## Are weight-loss medications safe?

The side effects from weight-loss medications are usually mild if used only for 3 to 6 months. In some cases, though, serious side effects have been reported. Your doctor will need to monitor your health and check for side effects for the first few weeks or months.

Doctors don't know a lot about the longer-term health effects of weight-loss medications. Talk with your doctor about your health, whether or not you think you will be able to make the necessary lifestyle changes, and the idea of taking these medications for a longer period of time.

The most common weight-loss medications are listed in the table on **page 2**. Talk with your doctor about the pros and cons of each medication. This will help you decide if a weight-loss medication is a good option for you. Weight-loss medications are not usually covered by insurance.

Medication	Most common side effects	Cautions	Notes
<b>Phentermine</b> (Adipex) Appetite suppressant (makes you feel less hungry)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher blood pressure</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Headache</li> <li>• Upset stomach</li> <li>• Trouble sleeping</li> <li>• Restlessness</li> </ul>	<b>DO NOT:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change your dose.</li> <li>• Use during pregnancy, or if you have uncontrolled high blood pressure, seizures, heart failure, or stroke.</li> <li>• Take with any other medications, including over-the-counter or herbal medications, unless your doctor says its okay.</li> </ul>	While using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check your blood pressure every week.</li> <li>• If you are female, take a pregnancy test every month.</li> </ul>
<b>Diethylpropion</b> (Tenuate) Appetite suppressant (makes you feel less hungry)			
<b>Orlistat</b> (Xenical, Alli OTC) Lipase inhibitor (keeps your body from absorbing some fat)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diarrhea</li> <li>• Passing gas</li> <li>• Bloating</li> <li>• Abdominal pain</li> <li>• Upset stomach</li> </ul>	<b>DO NOT:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change your dose.</li> <li>• Use during pregnancy.</li> <li>• Take with any other medications, including over-the-counter or herbal medications, unless your doctor says its okay.</li> </ul>	While using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are female, take a pregnancy test every month.</li> <li>• Eat a balanced, reduced-calorie diet with about 30% of calories from fat.</li> <li>• Take a multivitamin containing fat-soluble vitamins (vitamins A, D, E, K) once a day, at least 2 hours before or after taking orlistat.</li> </ul>
<b>Lorcaserin hydrochloride</b> (Belviq) Appetite suppressant (makes you feel less hungry)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Cognitive changes</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Dry mouth</li> <li>• Constipation</li> </ul>	<b>DO NOT:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change your dose.</li> <li>• Use during pregnancy.</li> <li>• Take with any other medications, including over-the-counter or herbal medications, unless your doctor says its okay.</li> </ul>	While using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are female, take a pregnancy test every month.</li> <li>• There is an increased risk of hypoglycemia, headache, back pain, cough, and fatigue in patients living with diabetes.</li> </ul>
<b>Phentermine topiramate</b> (Qsymia) Appetite suppressant (makes you feel less hungry)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbness or tingling in the skin</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Changed sense of taste</li> <li>• Insomnia</li> <li>• Constipation</li> <li>• Dry mouth</li> </ul>	<b>DO NOT:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change your dose.</li> <li>• Use during pregnancy.</li> <li>• Take with any other medications, including over-the-counter or herbal medications, unless your doctor says its okay.</li> <li>• Use if you have hyperthyroidism, glaucoma, or are taking medication for epilepsy, or certain medications for depression.</li> </ul>	While using: If you are female, take a pregnancy test every month.

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