

Anti-Obesity Medication: A Helpful Tool to Treat Obesity

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Two out of three Americans are either overweight or obese and 93 million of them—roughly a third of the U.S. population—have obesity. Obesity is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) of 30 and above. Overweight is defined as a BMI greater than 25 and less than 30. To put this into perspective, a woman who is 5' 6" and weighs 186 lbs or a man who is 6' and weighs over 221 lbs would be considered obese.

Obesity is associated with a host of medical, emotional, and social implications including increased risk for heart disease, depression, and stigmatization. Researchers have identified several factors that contribute to the complex disease of obesity: genetics, alterations in gene expression, environmental factors, the gut microbiome, medications, endocrine disorders, and others.

For many people, well-meaning advice to eat less and exercise more does not result in significant or, more importantly, *sustained* weight loss. The media is full of conflicting research on the best diet for weight loss, creating confusion and frustration for individuals looking for a cure for their obesity. There is, however, consensus among obesity medicine experts on certain approaches to losing weight: following a healthy diet, participating in regular exercise, getting adequate sleep, and having success with stress management. When these methods do not yield desired results, there are other tools to help treat obesity, including bariatric surgical procedures, new devices, and medications.

There are five FDA-approved anti-obesity medications, as well as similar generic medications that can be used off-label for the treatment of obesity. Anti-obesity medications are typically used to treat obese individuals and others who are overweight and have a related medical condition such as hypertension or type 2 diabetes. Medications for weight loss are intended to be used long-term to prevent weight regain and work by reducing appetite. They may, like all medications, have side effects.

Research shows anti-obesity medications can result in average weight loss of 5–10 percent when used along with healthy diet and regular exercise. Some respond even better and achieve beyond 10 percent body weight loss. Most anti-obesity medications work by decreasing appetite, often resulting in an individual feeling that it is easier to make healthier food choices, feel satisfied with smaller portions, and experience fewer food cravings.

There is no quick fix for treating overweight and obesity. A healthy diet and regular exercise remain the pillars of obesity treatment, but these methods alone do not work for everyone. At CMC's New England Weight Management Institute (NEWMI), we offer medical weight loss treatment, including anti-obesity medications, as part of our multidisciplinary approach to helping individuals on their journey towards a healthier life.



The New England Weight
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