

MYTH #4

WEIGHT LOSS MEDICATIONS CAUSE HARM



PRESCRIPTION WEIGHT LOSS MEDICATIONS ARE THOROUGHLY TESTED FOR SAFETY BEFORE THEY ARE APPROVED BY HEALTH AUTHORITIES.

On the contrary, weight loss pills that are obtained over-the-counter are neither regulated for safety, or tested rigorously for effectiveness. Together with lifestyle modifications, weight loss medications increase the likelihood of achieving 5% to 10% weight loss by 2-3 times.



WHO IS SUITABLE FOR WEIGHT LOSS MEDICINE?

If you have not been able to lose sufficient weight despite lifestyle modifications, you may consider weight loss medications provided:

- BMI > 30kg/m² OR
- BMI > 27.5kg/m² with associated obesity related conditions

(source: MOH Obesity Guidelines 2016)



HOW DO THEY WORK?

Weight loss medications work by one of the following 3 ways:



1. Trick our brain into not feeling hungry
2. Mimic the action of intestinal hormones by inducing the "fullness" sensation
3. Reduce the absorption of fat from our diet

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

Common side effects are:

- Nausea
- Abdominal bloatedness
- Diarrhea/ Constipation
- Palpitations
- Dry Mouth
- Headaches

Serious side effects are rare.



HOW LONG DO I NEED TO TAKE?

Generally, your doctor will advise you to take for a period of 3 to 6 months and assess for benefits.



You can take these medications long term if

- You "respond" by losing at least 5% of weight
- You have no/ or minimal side effects

WILL I PUT ON MORE WEIGHT IF I STOP?

Just like other chronic conditions, your weight may rebound when you stop the medication.

This does NOT mean that you are "addicted" to the medication, but it means that the withdrawal of treatment has allowed the condition to re-surface.



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