

New Emerging Therapies for Weight Loss

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After the holiday season, a lot of people are wondering what to do with extra pound that were put on during the holiday season. A lot of people have made a New Year resolution to lose weight and they wonder if they can do it. There are not much pharmaceutical therapies approved by FDA for the weight loss. The two FDA approved medications are short-term use of Phentermine and Orlistat for relatively long-term use for weight loss. It has been reported by all kinds of clinic studies to show that they only have very moderate effects on weight loss. Some off-label use of medications for weight loss have not been approved by FDA and they carry a high risk. In the coming new year, do we have any new hope for the pharmaceutical therapy for weight loss? What can we do to lose weight?

Obesity is defined by body mass index. Obesity is associated with several very common medical problems like diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, gastric acid reflux disease (GERD), non-alcoholic fatty liver, obstructive sleep apnea and even cancer. Obesity is determined by genetic and environmental factors. It is a form of excessive energy storage. The basic strategy for weight loss is decreased energy intake and increased energy consumption. The current theories about obesity are that our brain has a set point for the weight we are going to maintain. Even though you do lose weight in a short period but the body will try to gain the weight back afterwards. In another words, the theory indicates that no matter what you do, if you cannot reset the set point in your brain, you cannot permanently lose your weight.

So far only gastric bariatric surgeries have been said to have the ability to reset the set point, but only morbid obese people are qualified for the bariatric surgery. Most people have mild to moderate obesity, who are not qualified for the bariatric surgeries. But we from now and then have heard successful stories about people with the weight loss of more than 50 pounds with medication, diet or exercise programs on the market. There are still a lot of debates about current obesity theory. The combination of diet, exercise, behaviors therapy plus medication does work for most mild to moderate obese people. Research has been very active in this field. There is off label use of certain medications for treatment of obesity with some success. Such medications include anti-epileptic medication like Topamax, anti-depressant medications like Wellbutrin, and anti-diabetic medications like Metformin, Januvia, and Byetta. Certain combination of those medications have been tried with more potency in the weight loss. Several of these combination medications have been on trial and in the phase II trials with some encouraging results. These include the following: Qnexa by Vivus, Contrave by Orexigen and Lorcaserin by Arena. If they can pass the FDA safety check and enter the market, that will bring new hope to people with obesity.

What currently can we do for the weight loss? This includes diet by reaching the negative energy intake. It is the basis for the weight loss. Even though there are a lot of diet programs available, the sustained effect is still controversial. A low fat diet and low energy density food have been proved to be useful for the weight loss and also for the general health. Exercise increases the energy consumption, which in combination with diet will definitely help the weight loss. There is a lot of choice for people wanting to seek extra help from medications, but it needs to be individualized and closely monitored. If it is used appropriately, it will definitely help and maintain the weight loss. If you have any questions about weight loss, please contact Dr. Jeff Ye, North Atlanta Medical & Digestive Care at 770-346-0900. We can help you with the best individualized treatment plan for you.