

New Therapies for Weight Loss

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FDA approved two new drugs for weight loss in June 2012 and they are available on the market now. They are Lorcaserin (Belviq) and Phentermine/Topiramate(Qsymia), indicated for long-term use for weight loss. Qsymia is more effective in selected population whereas Belviq only has moderate effect. Unfortunately, these medications are expensive and a lot of insurance plans do not cover them. But the individual medication in Qsymia is quite inexpensive (you can get Phentermine 37.5 mg per month for as low as \$15).

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 other 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. There are still a lot of debates about current obesity theory. The combination of diet, exercise, behavioral therapy plus medication does work for most mild to moderate obese people. There is off label use of certain medications for treatment of obesity with some success like antidepressant medications Wellbutrin, anti-diabetic medications Metformin, Victoza and Byetta. Some combinations of those medications have been tried with more potency for weight loss.

I have successfully used Phentermine, Topiramate, Wellbutrin, Metformin, Victoza and Byetta combined with diet/exercise to treat patients for weight loss for several years. This is a step-wise, comprehensive and individualized program with careful evaluation of the patient's history and physical examination. The program includes: diet by teaching the patients to reach the negative energy intake. A low fat diet and low energy density food have been proved to be useful for weight loss and also for the general health; Exercise program to increase the energy consumption; individualized medication program with close monitoring. 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.