

Few patients use weight-loss medications despite FDA approval

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Despite guidelines that advocate the use of weight loss medications to treat obesity, and the availability of FDA approved medications, very few patients use this treatment option, a new study suggests. The results will be presented Sunday, April 3, at ENDO 2016, the annual meeting of the Endocrine Society, in Boston.

More than a third of adults in the U.S. have obesity. Lifestyle changes produce modest [weight loss](#) and are appropriate for everyone with a weight problem. Surgery is an effective treatment but it is costly, carries risk and is only appropriate for a limited number of people. Weight loss medications can be effective, and guidelines suggest obese [patients](#) and their doctors should consider their use for selected patients.

"We looked at how commonly weight loss medications were prescribed to patients for whom guidelines suggest this treatment would be appropriate," said lead author Daniel Bessesen, MD, Professor of Medicine and Chief of Endocrinology at the University of Colorado and Denver Health Medical Center. "It seems that despite the broad realization that obesity is a problem and that there are available FDA approved medications, few patients use this [treatment option](#)."

In this study, researchers used [electronic medical records](#) from nine sites from 2009-2013. They discovered that out of more than 2 million eligible patients, only 1.02 percent received a weight loss medication. The most commonly prescribed medication was phentermine, which is generic and inexpensive, but only FDA approved for three months of

use.

Researchers also found that a small number of providers write a vast majority of the prescriptions for weight loss medications.

"In many other diseases like hypertension and diabetes, treatment with medications is common and considered standard practice," Bessesen said. "There remain many questions about why so few patients use weight loss medications."

Provided by The Endocrine Society

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