

Weight Loss Medications in Australia

Disclaimer: This information is general in nature and is not medical advice. Prescription medicines are only available following an assessment by a registered medical practitioner.

Introduction

Losing weight and keeping it off is difficult. Sometimes, even with diet, exercise, and healthy habits, weight loss is slow or stops altogether. In those cases, **weight loss medications** can be considered as an added support.

How Weight Loss Medications Work

Weight loss medications can help by:

- Reducing hunger
- Making you feel full longer
- Slowing digestion
- Helping control cravings
- Improving blood sugar levels

Medication Information

| Medication | How It Works | How It's Taken | Common Side Effects | Notes |
|---|---|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Duromine (Phentermine) | Reduces appetite by stimulating the brain's hunger-regulating areas | Oral tablet, once daily | Dry mouth, insomnia, increased heart rate | Short-term use, often prescribed for up to 12 weeks |
| Orlistat (Xenical®) | Blocks fat absorption in the gut | Oral capsule, 3x/day with meals | Oily stools, gas, diarrhoea | Available without prescription |
| Semaglutide (Wegovy®) | Strong GLP-1 hormone effect to reduce appetite and slow digestion | Weekly injection | Nausea, constipation, fatigue | Prescription only; also improves blood sugar |
| Tirzepatide (Mounjaro®) | Dual GIP and GLP-1 hormone action; reduces appetite, improves sugar control | Weekly injection | Nausea, diarrhoea, low appetite | Prescription only; also used for diabetes |
| Naltrexone/Bupropion (Contrave®) | Works in the brain to reduce hunger and cravings | Oral tablet, twice daily | Nausea, headache, increased blood pressure | Prescription only |

This information is general only and does not replace medical advice. All prescription medicines must be reviewed for suitability by a registered medical practitioner.

How Doctors Assess Treatment Options

- **Oral (tablet) options:** Doctors may use oral options such as Contrave® or Duromine®. (Note: Duromine is generally used short-term; Contrave may help reduce cravings, including for sugar.)
- **Weekly injections:** Weekly injections such as **semaglutide (Wegovy®)** or **tirzepatide (Mounjaro®)** may be chosen when

less frequent dosing is suitable and clinically appropriate.

- **Type 2 diabetes with weight concerns:** For people with type 2 diabetes who also need weight management, medications such as semaglutide (Wegovy®) or tirzepatide (Mounjaro®) can be used when clinically appropriate. (Note: Tirzepatide has demonstrated effects on both weight and blood sugar in clinical studies.)
- **Non-prescription options: Orlistat (Xenical®)** can be purchased without a prescription and works by blocking fat absorption, but can be associated with more digestive side effects.

Weight Loss Medications: Side-by-Side Comparison

| Medication | How You Take It | Works Best For | Key Highlights | Common Side Effects |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--|---|---|
| Duromine (Phentermine) | Oral tablet, once daily | Short-term appetite suppression | Fast-acting; not for long-term use | Dry mouth, insomnia, increased heart rate |
| Semaglutide (Wegovy®) | Weekly injection | Appetite suppression + blood sugar control | Administered once weekly | Nausea, constipation |
| Tirzepatide (Mounjaro®) | Weekly injection | Weight loss + diabetes management | Used for weight management and blood sugar control | Nausea, diarrhoea |
| Naltrexone/Bupropion (Contrave®) | Pill, twice daily | Reducing cravings (especially sugar) | May be used when cravings or emotional eating are present | Nausea, headache |

Important Reminders:

- Medications **work best when combined** with healthy eating, exercise, and lifestyle changes.
- **Regular doctor follow-ups** are needed to monitor your progress and manage side effects.
- Guidelines recommend reviewing treatment if adequate response is not achieved after **12 weeks** at the full dose.

Contraindications

Certain health conditions may prevent you from using specific weight loss medications. It is essential to discuss your medical history with your doctor to ensure the medication is safe for you.

- **Duromine (Phentermine):** Contraindicated in patients with a history of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, hyperthyroidism, or glaucoma.
- **Orlistat (Xenical®):** Not suitable for individuals with malabsorption disorders or cholestasis (liver or bile duct issues).
- **Semaglutide (Wegovy®):** Not for people with a personal or family history of medullary thyroid carcinoma or multiple endocrine neoplasia syndrome type 2.
- **Tirzepatide (Mounjaro®):** Contraindicated in patients with a history of thyroid cancer or pancreatitis.
- **Naltrexone/Bupropion (Contrave®):** Should not be used by individuals with uncontrolled hypertension, seizure disorders, or eating disorders.

Summary of Medication Characteristics

Duromine®: typically used short-term for appetite suppression.

Contrave®: acts on craving and reward pathways and may help when cravings or emotional eating are prominent.

Wegovy® and Mounjaro®: weekly GLP-1based (and GLP-1/GIP for Mounjaro®) injections used in weight management, which also improve blood sugar control in people with type 2 diabetes.