

Complications on a Weight-Loss Journey

Anti-obesity medication can be an effective way to treat obesity and might be the extra boost your treatment plan needs to help you reach your goals. For many, these medications can be a game-changer, but like any medication, they might come with some side effects or complications. Knowing how to spot and manage the symptoms of problems from your medications can help you prevent, detect, and treat them.

Side Effects of Anti-Obesity Medications

Side effects that can happen suddenly include:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Dizziness
- Feeling tired
- Constipation
- Dehydration
- Stomach pain
- Diarrhea

Side effects that develop over time and can lead to more serious problems down the road if not treated include:

- Pancreas inflammation
- Bowel obstruction
- Gallbladder problems
- Kidney problems or failure
- Other digestion issues

Side effects from these medications are different from person to person and some people might not have any at all. If you have any of these side effects, it's important to tell your doctor right away so they can get you the help you need to feel better. If you have a serious allergic reaction, such as difficulty breathing, swelling, hives, or drop in blood pressure, to the medication, you should seek medical care immediately.

Can you overdose on obesity medication?

Yes, taking more medication than what is prescribed by your doctor can lead to an overdose. While symptoms of an overdose are like normal side effects of the medicine, these can be more severe and last for longer. Seek medical attention right away if you are experiencing:

- Severe vomiting or diarrhea that prevents you from keeping anything down
- Inability to use the bathroom
- Severe stomach pain that will not go away
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin)

If you are also taking medications that can lower your blood glucose (blood sugar), such as insulin or sulfonylureas, an overdose of these medications raises your risk of low blood glucose (hypoglycemia).



Knowing Your Risks

These factors can increase your chances of side effects and complications:

- Starting with a high medication dose or increasing it too fast can raise the risk of side effects.
- Having health conditions, like diabetes, kidney problems, or gastrointestinal (GI) disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome or colitis, can cause certain side effects to become more intense.
- Lifestyle factors, such as dehydration, a diet low in fiber, or a diet high in fat, can make your symptoms worse.

Knowing your risk factors will help you and your doctor when creating your treatment plan to stay safe and comfortable while on your weight-wellness journey.

How to Prevent Complications

To help prevent side effects and sudden complications:

- **Take medications as prescribed:** Make sure to take your medications exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Call or message your doctor right away if you have any questions on how to take the medicine.
- **Listen to your body:** When starting a new medication or increasing your dose, pay attention to how you are feeling. Make sure to write down any side effects you experience so you can let your doctor know during your next visit.



- **Stay hydrated:** Drinking enough water helps to avoid side effects like dizziness, nausea, and constipation.
- **Eat balanced meals:** To reduce the chances of GI symptoms, try the the Diabetes Plate. This visual tool guides you to fill half your plate with non-starchy vegetables, one-quarter with lean protein, and one-quarter with quality carbohydrates.

The most important step in prevention is making sure you reach out to your doctor right away if you start to have symptoms.

Managing Symptoms if They Come Up

Prevention isn't about being perfect, and unfortunately, even with our best efforts, side effects can still happen. Let's look at some steps you can take to manage symptoms effectively if they happen to you. If you experience:

- **Nausea:** Avoid rich, spicy, or fatty foods and try eating smaller meals more often. Alcohol can also irritate the stomach lining and cause more nausea, so try to avoid it or drink less. Choose ginger and mint beverages, such as teas, to help ease nausea.
- **Vomiting:** Drink plenty of water and try eating smaller amounts of food throughout the day. If vomiting is severe, call your doctor and seek medical care right away.
- **Diarrhea:** Avoid high-fiber foods and stick to bland foods like toast or bananas until symptoms go away. Make sure to drink enough water to help you stay hydrated.
- **Constipation:** Include enough fiber in your meals and drink plenty of water during the day.

If you have symptoms, don't forget to reach out to your doctor as soon as possible so they can help you feel better. Your doctor may recommend additional strategies to help, such as **adjusting your medication, recommending additional lifestyle changes, or adding medications to relieve symptoms and help support you on your journey.**

The Bottom Line

By identifying, preventing, and managing symptoms of complications, you can stay on track with your health goals. Remember, your health care team will work with you on your weight-wellness journey. The best way to include them is by letting them know as soon as things come up. Don't hesitate to reach out for support whenever you need it. With the right strategies, you can be confident and successful on your weight-wellness journey.

Help us improve the information and guidance we provide by sharing your feedback on this resource. Scan the QR code for the evaluation survey.

