

Dietary advice for patients taking Orlistat (Xenical)



Information for patients
Sheffield Dietetics



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Introduction

Being overweight is associated with a variety of medical problems and diseases, for example cardiovascular disease (stroke and heart disease), osteoarthritis and some cancers. The best way to lose weight is through a healthy, low calorie (energy) diet and regular exercise, as well as looking at improving your eating habits.

Orlistat (Xenical) is a drug that is prescribed by your GP. It has been developed to aid weight loss. Studies have shown that by using Orlistat, together with a healthy diet and exercise, there is increased weight loss. It does not replace diet or exercise and it does not suppress your appetite.

How does Orlistat work?

- Orlistat works by preventing around one third of the dietary fat that you eat from being absorbed by your body. The dietary fat that is not absorbed will pass through the body and be passed out in the faeces.
- Eating foods which are high in fat whilst taking Orlistat can lead to unpleasant side effects. Following a healthy, low fat diet will ensure that you do not get these side effects.
- Dietary fat is high in calories. You will therefore absorb fewer calories from fat whilst taking Orlistat. Orlistat will not stop you absorbing any of the calories from protein, carbohydrates or alcohol. You must continue to eat a healthy, low fat diet and take regular exercise to help you lose weight.

Important notes

- You must achieve at least 5% weight loss within 3 months otherwise treatment with Orlistat may be stopped. Your dietitian or doctor will be able to discuss your weight loss target with you. If you meet your weight loss target you can continue to take the drug as advised by your doctor or dietitian. Some patients may not be offered Orlistat for longer than 12 months at a time. Your doctor will discuss this with you.
- Orlistat may potentially impair the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K). Your dietitian may recommend that you take a multivitamin and mineral supplement whilst taking Orlistat. It will need to be taken at least 2 hours after taking Orlistat or at bedtime.

Side effects

The main side effects of Orlistat are caused by the fat which your body is passing out in your faeces. Most of the side effects occur during the early stages of treatment and usually become less troublesome with time.

Side effects can include an increased urgency to go to the toilet, diarrhoea, wind and offensive smelling fatty stools (that won't flush away). These side effects are less likely if you follow a healthy, low fat diet.

When should you not take the drug?

- If you are pregnant or breast feeding.
- If you are allergic to Orlistat or any of the ingredients in Orlistat.
- If you suffer from chronic malabsorption syndrome.
- If you have cholestasis (liver disorder).

Recommended dose

The maximum dose for Orlistat is 1 tablet (120 mg) three times per day. Ideally, the drug should be taken immediately before, during, or up to 1 hour following a meal. If a meal is missed for any reason do not take the tablet.

Orlistat and other drugs

Orlistat can be taken safely alongside most other drugs including Phenytoin, Atorvastatin or Amitriptyline. There is no interaction with alcohol.

- It is recommended that you do not take Orlistat if you take either of the following drugs:
 - Cyclosporin
 - Acarbose
- You may need to be monitored more closely by your doctor if you take Orlistat alongside the following drugs:
 - Warfarin or other anticoagulants
 - Amiodarone
 - Antiepileptic drugs for example, Valproate and Lamotrigine
- The dose of drugs used to treat other conditions, for example high cholesterol or diabetes, may need to be adjusted as you lose weight.
- It is recommended that Orlistat is used with caution if you take antidepressants or antipsychotic drugs alongside Orlistat as it may affect how well these drugs work.
- Orlistat may reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives and lead to unexpected pregnancies in cases of severe diarrhoea; an additional contraceptive method is recommended.

It is important to follow the manufacturer's advice about this medication. This can be found on the 'Package information leaflet: information for the user' accompanying your prescription.

Orlistat and diet

It is important that you continue to follow a healthy, low calorie diet whilst taking Orlistat. Your diet should be low in fat, as eating foods which are high in fat whilst taking Orlistat can cause unpleasant side effects.

Tips to help you cut down on fat and eat healthily

- Eat regularly, don't skip meals. You will need to take one Orlistat three times per day immediately before, during, or up to 1 hour following a meal.
- Cut down on portion sizes. Serve less at meal times by using a smaller plate, for example a tea plate, or give yourself a couple of spoonfuls less at each meal. This will add up to a calorie save over the day.
- Eat more fruit and vegetables. Aim to fill half your plate with salads and vegetables at meal times.
- Slow down at meal times. Chew food slowly and try having breaks by putting your knife and fork down several times throughout a meal.
- Check food labels to help you choose low fat foods. There is a section about how to do this further on in this leaflet.
- Avoid all fried food. Restrict fats used in cooking and in food preparation, for example, oils in cooking, and avoid additions like mayonnaise and French dressing.
- Trim the fat off meat and take the skin off poultry before cooking.

- Choose low fat dairy products, for example skimmed or semi skimmed milk, diet yoghurt and diet fromage frais, reduced fat cheese and low fat cottage cheese.
- Avoid high fat foods, for example pies, pastries, cakes, some biscuits, crisps, salad dressings, chocolate.

What makes up a healthy, low fat diet?

Starchy foods

These foods should make up around one quarter to one third of your plate at meal times, for example bread, potatoes, pasta, rice and cereals. Try to include high fibre varieties, for example wholegrain bread and cereals, as these are generally more filling. Don't add fat to these, for example butter to mashed potatoes.

Fruit and vegetables

Include vegetables or salad at each meal, around half your plate. Aim to include 5 per day of any fruit or vegetables, for example fresh, frozen or tinned in natural juice.

Fruit is a healthy in-between meal snack. Limit fresh unsweetened fruit juices to one small glass a day.

Meat, fish and alternatives

These foods should make up around one quarter of your plate at meal times. Include 2-3 servings of these foods per day.

Remember to cook these foods without adding extra fat like oils, and remove any visible fat or skin from meat and chicken.

Dairy foods

Dairy foods include milk, yoghurt, cheese and fromage frais. Remember to choose low fat varieties, for example skimmed or semi skimmed milk, low fat yoghurts and cheeses.

Include 2-3 servings of these per day. Watch your portion sizes: a portion of cheese is 1 small matchbox size (1oz), or 1½ oz of a lower fat cheese such as brie, camembert, Edam or reduced fat hard cheese.

Don't forget

Provided that portion sizes of dairy foods and meats and alternatives are not too large, and extra fat isn't added to these foods, they will not cause any unpleasant side effects whilst you are taking Orlistat.

Foods containing fat and foods containing sugar

Foods which are high in sugar and fat usually contain lots of calories so cutting down on, or avoiding these foods can help you lose weight. Aim to reduce the amount of sugar in your diet as much as possible: have hot drinks without sugar or instead, use a sweetener, choose 'no added sugar' squashes, diet, slimline fizzy drinks and choose tinned fruit in natural juice rather than in syrup.

Foods which are high in fat will cause unpleasant side effects whilst taking Orlistat.

High fat foods to avoid include:

Fried foods, fat on meats, fatty cuts of meat, crisps, nuts, peanut butter, salad dressing unless fat free, cream, ice cream, cream cheese, pastries, tarts, pies, cakes, batters, creamed soups, lard, dripping, chocolate biscuits.

Alcohol

It is recommended that both men and women should not regularly drink more than 14 units a week. Don't forget that alcohol contains 'empty' calories so cutting down on, or avoiding, alcohol will help you reduce your calorie intake which can help you lose weight. Did you know that a pint of lager contains about the same amount of calories as a packet of crisps?

1 unit is: -

1 small glass of wine (125mls)

1 small glass of sherry (50mls)

½ pint of ordinary strength bitter, lager or cider

1 single pub measure of spirits (25mls)

Suggested meal pattern

Remember to try not to snack in between meals as snacks will provide extra calories that you do not need. You will lose weight by reducing the amount of calories that you eat and exercising regularly. Think about whether you are truly hungry or whether it might be a craving.

Breakfast

1 piece of fruit or small glass of unsweetened fruit juice

With cereal or porridge with semi skimmed milk

Or bread/toast thinly spread with low fat or polyunsaturated margarine

Mid morning/mid afternoon

If you feel hungry and need to include a snack, choose low calorie snacks, for example:

1 piece of fruit, 1 plain biscuit, for example rich tea or ginger nut, 2 crackers or 1 low calorie hot chocolate, for example Options or Highlights

Lunch

Meat or alternative or small piece of low fat cheese

With salad

And bread, bread roll, pitta bread or jacket potato

1 piece of fruit or diet yoghurt or similar low fat/low sugar dessert

Evening meal

Meat or alternative

With vegetables or salad

And potatoes, pasta, rice or noodles

Make sure you include plenty of low calorie fluids over the day, for example unsweetened tea, coffee, no added sugar dilute squash or water.

Exercise

It is important to include regular physical activity in your daily routine. This will help you to keep your weight under control and improve your fitness levels and heart health.

Aim to exercise for 30 minutes per day, 5 times a week, for example brisk walking, gardening, cycling, and swimming. You may need to start off slowly and build up to this by exercising for 10 minutes 3 times a day. To help you lose weight, you are likely to need to do more exercise than this.

Check with your doctor if you have not done any exercise for a while. Generally walking is a safe exercise for most people.

Understanding food labels: how to choose low fat foods

When reading food labels look at **'total fat'** as it is this part of your diet that can cause the unpleasant side effects from Orlistat if your fat intake is too high.

On the food label look at the **'per 100g'** column:

- **Total fat per 100g of product**

Choose foods with a total fat content of **less than 5g/100g** product and preferably **3g/100g or less**.

Remember not to add any extra fats to other foods eaten with the meal, for example by adding butter or oils to a jacket potato, pasta or rice.

Tips when reading food labels

- Check the labels of the foods you buy regularly for the fat content and switch to healthier options where appropriate.
- Assume your first few shopping trips will take longer than usual while you are learning to understand food labels.

Nutrition labels on the front of packaging

Some supermarkets and food manufacturers also display nutritional information on the front of pre-packaged foods. This can be helpful to compare different food products.

The figures used on these labels are 'per portion' and not 'per 100g'. Use caution when reading this information as portion sizes on these labels might be different to the portion size you choose to help you lose weight. You still need to look at the total amount of fat per 100g.

Red, amber and green colour-coding

This type of food label is helpful to know whether a food has high, medium or low amounts of fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt. The more greens there are, the healthier the choice.

The figures used on these labels are also 'per portion' and not 'per 100g'. You still need to look at the total amount of fat per 100g.

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