

Should I Take a Pill to Lose Weight?

“When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you” (Prov. 2:10-11).

When my book, *Spiritual Secrets to Weight Loss: A 50 Day Renewal of Body, Mind and Spirit*, was released in 2008, the prescription drugs available for weight loss had dropped to only two. I review them, Meridia™ and Xenical™, on Day 41. No doubt the “Fen-Phen” disaster of the 1990s played a role. It drew much attention to drug safety. As a result of this heightened vigilance, in 2010 even Meridia™ was pulled from the market.

Since then, a few other medications have been approved bringing the total to four: Xenical™ (nonprescription Alli™), Belviq™, Qsymia™ and Contrave™. The last one, Contrave™, was only recently given the OK by the FDA after an initial rejection in 2011. Not surprisingly, research and development in this area is intense because the health consequences are so significant. Heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, cancer and many other conditions are related to body weight.

In light of all this, many people are wondering: “Are weight-loss drugs right for me?” There is much uncertainty, especially among people of faith. In my experience, Christians have some of the strongest reservations about using medications. Without question, it is a personal decision. As a physician and believer, however, let me suggest the following:

- **Weight-loss medications are not a quick fix.** Most will give a 5-10 percent reduction at best. So if you weigh 220 pounds for instance, they can help you get somewhere between 200 and 210.

- **Weight-loss medications do not make losing weight easy.** Lifestyle change is still necessary. The keys I write about in *Spiritual Secrets to Weight Loss* are “**Eat Well; Eat Less; Move More.**” No pill eliminates the need to embrace these three.
- **Weight-loss medications do not address mental and emotional health.** Depression, anxiety and stress can trigger overeating. They can also destroy the motivation needed for regular exercise.
- **Weight-loss medications do not fill a spiritual void.** Discipline, moderation and subjecting the flesh are virtues. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. These are matured through prayer, Bible study and having a heart to obey.

So do I prescribe weight-loss medications? Yes. And for some people they are a great help. For others, they are not. The same goes for weight-loss surgery. What are your thoughts and experiences? Feel free to share them here.

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