

Clinical Guide: FDA-Approved Medical Weight Loss Medications

A side-by-side comparison prepared by VIVAA Medical Weight Loss Program (Seattle & Bellevue)

MEDICATION	TYPE	MECHANISM OF ACTION (HOW IT WORKS)	COMMON SIDE EFFECTS	CLINICAL CONSIDERATIONS
Semaglutide <i>Wegovy / Ozempic</i>	INJECTION	GLP-1 receptor agonist. Mimics natural gut hormones to delay gastric emptying, suppress appetite, and significantly increase feelings of fullness.	• Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea • Constipation • Headache, dizziness, fatigue	Doses scale gradually over 16–20 weeks to reduce GI discomfort. Highly effective for long-term appetite regulation.
Tirzepatide <i>Zepbound / Mounjaro</i>	INJECTION	Dual GLP-1 and GIP receptor agonist. Works on two metabolic pathways simultaneously to reduce food cravings and deeply regulate calorie intake.	• Gastrointestinal upset • Nausea, constipation • Mild fatigue or headache	Indicated for adults with a BMI of ≥30, or ≥27 with comorbidities. Shown to deliver profound clinical weight reduction.
Liraglutide <i>Saxenda</i>	INJECTION	Daily GLP-1 receptor agonist. Acts directly on brain centers regulating hunger to trick the body into feeling satisfied sooner.	• Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea • Abdominal pain, dyspepsia • Risk of renal insufficiency	Contraindicated for individuals with a personal/family history of medullary thyroid cancer or MEN syndrome type 2.
Phentermine-Topiramate <i>Qsymia</i>	ORAL CAPSULE	Combines a central nervous stimulant (appetite suppressant) with a neurological medication to actively curb intense cravings.	• Altered taste, dry mouth • Insomnia, dizziness • Abnormal skin sensations	Excellent alternative for patients with co-occurring migraines. Avoid if managing uncontrolled high blood pressure or glaucoma.
Naltrexone-Bupropion <i>Contrave</i>	ORAL TABLET	Combines an opioid antagonist with an antidepressant. Targets the pleasure-reward centers of the brain to disrupt food addictions.	• Nausea, constipation • Headache, dizziness • Insomnia, dry mouth	Dose increases gradually over 4 weeks. Strictly contraindicated for individuals with seizure disorders or those taking prescription opioids.
Orlistat <i>Xenical / Alli</i>	ORAL CAPSULE	Lipase inhibitor. Functions entirely in the gut to block the enzyme responsible for breaking down fats, preventing fat absorption.	• Oily rectal discharge • Flatulence with discharge • Fecal urgency / incontinence	Must be paired closely with a low-fat, reduced-calorie diet to minimize gastrointestinal side effects. Helps prevent weight regain.

Disclaimer: This comparison chart is for informational purposes only and does not replace professional medical advice. All weight loss medications are strictly contraindicated during pregnancy. Patient outcomes scale optimally when clinical treatments are combined with a reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity. Discontinuing treatment may lead to weight regain. Schedule a comprehensive consultation at VIVAA to evaluate your medical background.