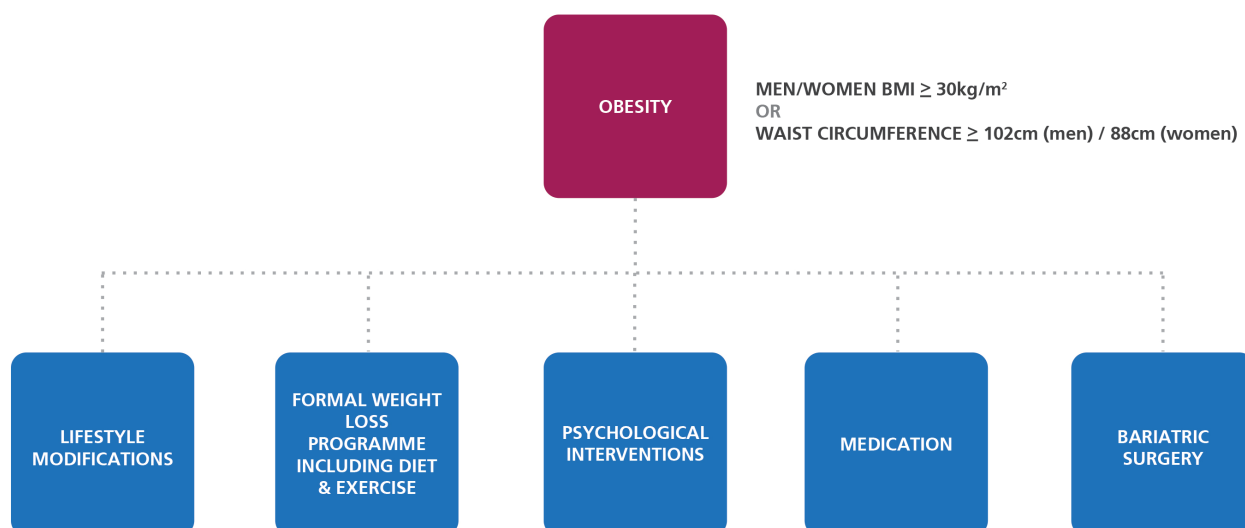


## Deciding what to do about obesity

This short decision aid is to help you decide what to do about being very overweight (obese). You can use it on your own, or with your doctor, to help you make a decision about what's right for you at this time.

There are five main options for treating obesity. The choices are:

- **Lifestyle changes.** People make changes to their diet, exercise, and lifestyle habits on their own or with support from self-help groups
- **Weight-loss programmes.** Plans that set out what, when, and how much to eat, and how and when to exercise. They may also include some psychological support. These include weight-loss programmes managed by a health professional or weight-loss organisation
- **Psychological treatments.** These include different types of treatments managed by a health professional or therapist to help change people's thoughts, feelings, and actions towards themselves, food, eating, and exercise.
- **Medication.** Taking a medicine (orlistat) to help lose weight. Orlistat is usually prescribed by a doctor.
- **Bariatric surgery.** Operations to change how much food, and how often, people can eat. There are several types of bariatric surgery. Surgery is not suitable for everyone who is very overweight.



## What are my options?

Treatment	What is the treatment?
<b>Lifestyle changes</b>	<p>Lifestyle changes are things people can do to lose weight without following a formal diet or exercise plan. You could think of it as a 'do it yourself' approach.</p> <p>Lifestyle changes are the most important thing that very overweight people can do to make a difference to their health. Whatever other weight-loss treatments you choose, lifestyle changes go hand in hand with them to get the best results. The other treatments people can choose for weight loss won't work as well without making lifestyle changes.</p> <p>Lifestyle changes that should help people lose weight include: eating less overall, eating healthier foods, eating lower-calorie foods, exercising more, and weighing yourself regularly.</p>
<b>Formal weight-loss programme</b>	<p>A formal weight-loss programme is a plan that people follow to help them lose weight. It could be a diet or exercise plan, or a mixture of both. Programmes that include both exercise and diet plans are more effective than programmes that just focus on one or the other.[1] And programmes that also include some psychological support work even better. These programmes help people change their behaviour and how they think about food.</p> <p>Your doctor can help you find a plan that suits you. They are likely to suggest a diet plan that involves eating fewer high-calorie, fatty, and sugary foods, and a sensible exercise plan.</p>
<b>Psychological treatments</b>	<p>When doctors talk about psychological treatments they usually mean so-called 'talking therapies'. These treatments involve a person talking with a trained therapist to get help with a problem.</p> <p>The treatments used most often are behavioural therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy.</p> <p>For people who are very overweight, the therapist aims to help give people a new set of skills to help them change their diet and become more active.</p> <p>Therapy often includes talking about your feelings, including how you feel about your body shape, your weight, and eating.</p> <p>If you binge on food because you're unhappy or stressed, your therapist can help you deal with that.</p> <p>The changes shouldn't end when therapy stops. With time and practice, people can learn to help themselves whenever they feel their old eating habits taking over again.</p>
<b>Medication</b>	<p>This means taking a drug called orlistat that can help people lose weight. It stops your body absorbing some of the fat from the food you eat.</p> <p>This doesn't mean that people who take orlistat can eat whatever they like and still lose weight. The medicine only works alongside a low-calorie, low-fat diet.</p> <p>You can get orlistat capsules on prescription from your doctor under the brand name Xenical. You can also buy orlistat from a pharmacist, without a prescription, under the brand name Alli. The pills you can buy from the pharmacist contain half the dose of the prescription version.</p> <p>Pharmacists will be able to help with any questions about over-the-counter orlistat.</p>
<b>Bariatric surgery</b>	<p>Some people who are very overweight may be able to have surgery. This treatment will not be suitable or available for most people who are very overweight. Most people who have surgery have tried other treatments first.</p> <p>Bariatric surgery usually means having an operation to change the way the stomach deals with food. The exception is having an intra-gastric balloon, which does not need an operation.</p> <p>Many types of bariatric surgery have been used over the years. The ones that work best and are most used are: gastric banding, gastric bypass, sleeve gastrectomy, and intra-gastric balloon.</p>

Treatment	What is the effect on weight loss?
<b>Lifestyle changes</b>	We can't say for sure how well lifestyle changes without outside support work to help people who are very overweight to lose weight. There isn't much research.
<b>Formal weight-loss programme</b>	<p>Low-calorie diets, very low-calorie diets, low-fat diets, and low-carbohydrate diets all help people lose weight.[2] [3] [4]</p> <p>After one year, people who are very overweight who use these diet plans lose about 5 percent (one twentieth) of their body weight.</p> <p>A low-carbohydrate diet can reduce food cravings and feelings of hunger better than some other diets.[5]</p> <p>People who use a diet plan lose more weight than people who exercise without changing their diet.[6] Exercise has many other health benefits as well as weight loss.</p> <p>People who use a weight-loss programme that includes both diet and exercise lose more weight than people who just try one or the other.[7] [8]</p> <p>Weight-loss programmes that set clear targets for weight loss can help more than programmes that don't use targets.[9]</p> <p>Internet-based weight-loss programmes help people lose weight, but they are less effective than programmes that involve face-to-face contact with a doctor or nurse.[10]</p> <p>People who are very overweight who use internet-based weight-loss programmes lose about half as much weight as people who use a programme that involves face-to-face treatment.[11]</p>
<b>Psychological treatments</b>	<p>Psychological treatments, such as behavioural therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy, may help people who are very overweight lose about the same amount of weight as a diet plan.[12] [13]</p> <p>People who are very overweight lose more weight if they use a diet plan as well as psychological treatment.[14]</p> <p>Involving a partner or family member in psychological treatment may help people lose more weight than doing it without support.[15]</p> <p>People who have group psychological treatment may lose more weight than people who have individual therapy.[16]</p> <p>People who lose weight using psychological treatment may regain much of the weight after treatment stops.[17] It is important to carry on with exercise and diet plans after psychological treatment ends.</p>
<b>Medication</b>	<p>People who are very overweight who take orlistat with a prescription from their doctor and follow a diet plan may lose about twice as much weight as people lose by following a diet plan alone.[18]</p> <p>Orlistat that can be bought over the counter can help people lose weight, but we can't say for sure how much. There hasn't been as much research about over-the-counter orlistat as there has about the prescription medicine.[19]</p>
<b>Bariatric surgery</b>	<p>Surgery is usually only available for people who are extremely overweight and whose weight is causing them health problems. Most people who have surgery try other treatments first.</p> <p>People who have bariatric surgery can lose a lot of weight and the effects can last a long time. Ten years after having bariatric surgery for obesity, most people will have lost between half and three-quarters of their excess weight (the amount of weight above their healthy limit).[20]</p> <p>People who follow an exercise programme after having surgery lose more weight than those who don't exercise.[21]</p> <p>People are more likely to regain weight after surgery if their body mass index (BMI) is greater than 50 before they have surgery.[22]</p>

Treatment	What is the effect on my health?
<b>Lifestyle changes</b>	Losing weight can reduce people's chances of getting many health problems, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and other serious conditions.[23] We can't say for sure how much making lifestyle changes without outside help can help people lose weight. There isn't much research.
<b>Formal weight-loss programme</b>	Using a diet plan to lose weight can help prevent type 2 diabetes and can lower blood pressure.[24] Exercising can reduce people's chance of getting heart disease.[25]
<b>Psychological treatments</b>	We can't say for sure that psychological treatments can improve people's physical health. But losing weight can reduce people's chance of getting many health problems, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and other serious conditions.[26]
<b>Medication</b>	People who are very overweight who take orlistat reduce their chance of getting type 2 diabetes in the next four years by an average of about one third.[27]  For people who are very overweight, taking orlistat may lower their cholesterol and blood pressure. High cholesterol and high blood pressure can cause heart problems.[28]
<b>Bariatric surgery</b>	Surgery is usually only available for people who are extremely overweight and whose weight is causing them health problems. Most people who have surgery try other treatments first.  People who are very overweight who have bariatric surgery reduce their chance of dying over the next 10 years by about one third.[29] [30]  People who are very overweight who have bariatric surgery reduce their chance of dying over the next seven years from heart disease by about half, and from cancer by more than half.[31]  Bariatric surgery cures type 2 diabetes in two-thirds to three-quarters of very overweight people with type 2 diabetes.[32] [33]

Treatment	What is the effect on my life?
<b>Lifestyle changes</b>	<p>Lifestyle changes can make people feel fitter and more able to exercise.</p> <p>Changing old habits and forming new habits takes time. People may need to find time to exercise, and plan meals ahead.</p>
<b>Formal weight-loss programme</b>	<p>A lifestyle programme that includes exercise may make people feel fitter and able to do more.</p> <p>Changing old habits and forming new habits takes time. People may need to find time to exercise and attend programme sessions, and plan meals ahead.</p>
<b>Psychological treatments</b>	<p>There hasn't been much research about whether psychological treatments can improve people's quality of life, but they can improve people's mood and make them feel more positive.</p> <p>Having psychological treatments to help lose weight will involve attending some appointments or group sessions.</p>
<b>Medication</b>	<p>There hasn't been much research about whether using orlistat to lose weight improves people's quality of life.</p> <p>People taking orlistat need to follow a diet plan and to remember to take the medicine at the right time.</p> <p>People who eat fatty foods while taking orlistat are likely to get an upset stomach or diarrhoea.[34]</p>
<b>Bariatric surgery</b>	<p>Surgery is usually only available for people who are extremely overweight and whose weight is causing them health problems. Most people who have surgery try other treatments first.</p> <p>People who have bariatric surgery say that their quality of life is better after surgery.[35] They are also less likely to suffer from depression than people of a similar weight who don't have surgery.[36]</p> <p>If bariatric surgery helps a very overweight person to lose a lot of weight, they are likely to be more mobile. They may find it easier to get around and do everyday things.</p> <p>In the months after surgery people may have some symptoms such as tiredness and aching, as their body gets used to losing a lot of weight quickly.</p> <p>For eight weeks people who have had surgery will need to follow a strict eating plan. After that, they will need to follow a long-term healthy diet plan. They may have to take some supplements (vitamins and minerals) for the rest of their lives.</p>

Treatment	What side effects does this treatment have?
<b>Lifestyle changes</b>	Making lifestyle changes shouldn't have any side effects.
<b>Formal weight-loss programme</b>	Sensible weight-loss programmes approved by a doctor are unlikely to have side effects.
<b>Psychological treatments</b>	Psychological treatments to help people lose weight are unlikely to have side effects.
<b>Medication</b>	<p>The main side effect of orlistat is diarrhoea. Most people who take orlistat have diarrhoea at some point. [37]</p> <p>People are more likely to have diarrhoea with orlistat if they eat a high-fat meal, so people who take orlistat need to stick to a low-fat diet.[38]</p>
<b>Bariatric surgery</b>	<p>About 13 in 100 people have problems after bariatric surgery, including infection, bleeding, and blood clots in the legs and lungs.[39]</p> <p>Between 2 in 100 and 3 in 100 people need a second operation because of complications with the first one.[40]</p> <p>Between 2 in 1,000 and 3 in 1,000 people die within three months of having bariatric surgery, compared with 1 in 1,000 people of a similar weight who don't have surgery.[41]</p> <p>Some people who lose a lot of weight after bariatric surgery find that they have a lot of loose skin some months after the operation, especially around the breasts, tummy, hips, arms, and legs.</p>

## What are the pros and cons of each option?

People who are very overweight have different experiences about the health problem and views on treatment. Choosing the treatment option that is best for the patient means considering how the consequences of each treatment option will affect their life.

Here are some questions people may want to consider about treatment for obesity:

- Do they want the treatment that will help them lose the most weight, no matter what it involves?
- Do they want a treatment that improves their quality of life?
- Is avoiding serious health problems caused by obesity the most important thing to them?
- Are they willing to make lifestyle changes?
- Is avoiding side effects important to them?
- Is avoiding a lot of appointments or time in hospital important to them?
- Are they willing to consider having surgery?
- Is living as long as possible the most important thing to them?