



Patient & Family Guide
2025

Diet Pills



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Diet Pills

What are diet pills?

- Diet pills are medications to help you lose weight or lower your appetite.
- They may be sold over-the-counter (without a prescription), at a pharmacy with a prescription, or may be included in herbal products.
- Diet pills come in different forms, including capsules, tablets, and powders.

Why do people take diet pills?

- Some people take diet pills because they believe these products will help them lose weight quickly or manage their appetite. These beliefs are often caused by feeling pressured by society to look a certain way.

Diet pills are not an effective or long-term way to control your weight. They can be harmful to your health.

- Many diet pills have stimulants or other ingredients that can raise your heart rate and blood pressure. This can cause an irregular heartbeat, chest pain, or a heart attack.

- Diet pills are also linked to stroke and seizures (sudden electrical brain activity that can change how you act, move, or feel for a short time).
- Diet pills often have ingredients that are harmful to the liver and kidneys. In very serious cases, this can cause organ failure.
- Overuse of some products can lead to severe (very bad) electrolyte imbalances. This can affect how your muscles work and cause heart problems.
- Misuse of diet pills can cause digestive problems, like:
 - › Constipation (not being able to poop)
 - › Diarrhea (loose, watery poop)
 - › Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach)
 - › Vomiting (throwing up)
 - › Stomach pain
- Ingredients in diet pills can cause anxiety, mood swings, and sleep problems. Misuse of some products can lead to episodes of:
 - › **Mania** (very high mood causing you to have more energy than usual)
 - › **Psychosis** (changes in your brain make it hard for you to tell what is real and what is not)

Diet pills and eating disorders

- Many people with eating disorders take diet pills to try to control their weight or appearance. They may do this because of their fears and beliefs about food, weight, and body shape.
- **Diet pills do not address these concerns and often make them worse.** This can lead to more health problems and reinforce (make stronger) disordered eating behaviours.
- People often take diet pills as a **safety behaviour** (doing something to prevent an outcome you are afraid of, even though it may only give relief for a short time and make your fears stronger). Diet pills are often used to lower anxiety about eating, weight gain, or body image concerns.
- Taking diet pills can:
 - › Reinforce beliefs that do not help, like “I must take these pills to stop my body from getting out of control.”
 - › Stop you from learning what happens to your body and your weight without diet pills.

- In eating disorder treatment, you must eat normally while interrupting weight control behaviours and safety behaviours to:
 - › Deal with your fears
 - › Break the cycle of disordered eating
 - › Achieve long-term recoveryYou **cannot** do this while taking diet pills.

What will happen if I stop taking diet pills?

- Stopping diet pills can lead to withdrawal symptoms (like anxiety, low energy, or short-term weight changes). These are common and will go away as your body adjusts.
- Diet pills cause you to lose weight by losing fluid, not fat. They are not a solution for weight control. To fully recover from the eating disorder, you must:
 - › Stop taking diet pills
 - › Eat regular meals and snacks

Remember: The only way to recover from an eating disorder is to stop taking diet pills.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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