EDITORIAL

Tips and Tricks While Prescribing the Highly Effective Anti-obesity Medications

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Abstract

With the advent of newer, highly effective anti-obesity medications, their use has increased significantly in clinical practice across all disciplines. The use of these medicines results in significant weight loss; however, the clinician should ensure the correct prescription hygiene is maintained while prescribing these drugs. The medications should not only be given to the right patient but also along with the right instructions. In this brief article, the author has summarized some of the key facts that should be kept in mind by the treating physician before prescribing these medicines.

Introduction

The use of highly effective anti-obesity medications (AOMs) has significantly transformed the therapeutic landscape for individuals struggling with obesity. While these pharmacological agents can facilitate substantial weight loss and improve metabolic health, optimizing their effectiveness and minimizing adverse effects require a comprehensive approach. This article offers practical suggestions for individuals taking AOMs, focusing on food composition, dietary strategies to mitigate side effects, and adjunctive medications that may help manage adverse reactions.

Suggestions for Individuals Using Highly Effective Anti-obesity Medications

Adherence to Medical Guidance: It is crucial for patients to follow their health care provider's instructions rigorously regarding dosage and timing of AOMs to ensure maximum efficacy and safety[1]. Regular follow-ups allow for dose adjustments and monitoring of therapeutic response and side effects.

Lifestyle Integration: AOMs are most effective when combined with sustainable lifestyle changes, particularly in diet and physical activity. Engaging with health care professionals can provide tailored support for these changes.

Monitoring and Communication: Patients should keep detailed records of their medication effects and any side effects experienced. Prompt communication with health care providers is essential to address any adverse events or concerns, which may include medication switches or supportive treatments.

Expect Realistic Outcomes: Understanding that AOMs are adjuncts to lifestyle modification can help set realistic expectations. Weight loss may vary, and continued efforts in nutrition and exercise remain critical.

These recommendations align with professional guidelines and emphasize a comprehensive, patient-centered approach to obesity management. Table 1 summarizes the key points to be told to the patient while prescribing these medicines

Table 1. Suggestions Given to a Person While Taking Highly Effective Anti-obesity Medications

Water intake of about 2-3 liters/day
Eat slowly
Increasing meal frequency
Only eat if hungry
No straw
Smaller portion size
No distractions while eating, avoid watching on mobile/screen time
Avoid lying down after a meal
Not too active after a meal
Food diary – to identify what works and what does not

Recommendations for Food Composition to Maximize Impact of Anti-obesity Medications

Optimizing diet composition enhances the pharmacologic effect of AOMs and supports sustainable weight loss (Table 2).

Balanced Macronutrient Distribution: A diet with a balanced intake of proteins, fats, and carbohydrates supports metabolic health. Protein-rich foods can promote satiety, preserving lean

Table 2. Recommendations for Food Composition to Maximize Impact of Anti-obesity Medications

Low-fat diet
Protein intake ~ 1.5 Kg/body weight
Fiber intake ~ 20-30 gm/day
Water-rich foods
Boiling and baked-in oven foods are better than fried foods
Clear drinks, small sips-avoid too much
More water-rich foods
Avoid sweets, salad dressings, spicy or canned foods
Adequate micronutrient cover

muscle mass during weight loss, which is crucial for metabolic rate maintenance[2].

Low Glycemic Index (GI) Foods: Emphasizing low-GI carbohydrates such as whole grains, legumes, vegetables, and fruits helps maintain glycemic control, which may be synergistic with certain AOMs that improve insulin sensitivity.

Adequate Fiber Intake: Dietary fiber from vegetables, fruits, and whole grains enhances satiety, aids digestion, and can improve gut health, thereby potentially augmenting the effects of AOMs.

Hydration: Maintaining adequate fluid intake supports metabolic processes and can help manage medication-related side effects such as constipation.

Avoidance of Highly Processed Foods: Minimizing intake of foods high in added sugars, unhealthy fats, and refined carbohydrates reduces inflammatory responses and prevents counteracting the benefits of AOMs.

These dietary principles reinforce the goal of creating a nutritional environment that complements pharmacotherapy and promotes long-term weight management[3].

Dietary Recommendations to Mitigate Side Effects

Side effects of AOMs can vary depending on the specific medication but often include gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, diarrhea, constipation, and abdominal discomfort. Dietary modifications can help alleviate these issues (Table 3).

Managing Nausea: Small, frequent meals that are bland and low in fat can reduce nausea. Ginger and peppermint tea may also provide symptomatic relief.

Addressing Diarrhea: Incorporating soluble fiber (e.g., oats, apples, bananas) helps absorb excess water in the intestines and normalize bowel movements. Avoiding caffeine and spicy foods can prevent irritation.

Table 3. Dietary Recommendations to Mitigate Side Effects

Nausea
Avoid strong smells
Eat as per liking – generally mint-based, ginger drinks, apple-based aromas - 30 mins after meal
Diarrhea
Generous hydration (water, lemon-based), to avoid sport-based drinks
Avoid dairy, caffeinated drinks, alcohol, very cold or very hot foods
Avoid a high-fiber diet
Constipation
Increase physical activity
Healthy balanced diet
Generous hydration
Increased fiber

Preventing Constipation: Increasing insoluble fiber intake (e.g., whole grains, nuts, seeds) and ensuring sufficient hydration can alleviate constipation. Probiotic-rich foods like yogurt may also support gut motility.

Reducing Abdominal Discomfort: Eating slowly and avoiding large meals can reduce bloating and discomfort.

Implementing these dietary strategies can enhance patient comfort and improve adherence to AOM regimens[3].

Medications to Mitigate Side Effects

In some cases, adjunctive pharmacologic treatments may be necessary to manage side effects of AOMs (Table 4).

Antiemetics: For persistent nausea, short-term use of antiemetic medications can be considered under medical supervision.

Table 4. Medications to Mitigate Side Effects

Gastroesophageal reflux	Nausea/Vomiting	Diarrhea	Constipation
Proton pump inhibitors - Eg: Pantoprazole	Serotonin 5-HT Antagonists - Eg: Ondansetron	Antimotility agents - Eg: Loperamide	Osmotic laxatives - Eg: Lactulose
H2 Antagonists - Eg: Ranitidine	Phenothiazines - Eg: Promethazine	Probiotics - Eg: Live lactic acid bacilli	Stimulant laxatives - Eg: Bisacodyl
Antacids - Eg: Aluminum and magnesium hydroxide	Antihistamines - Eg: Diphenhydramine		
	Benzamides - Eg: Metoclopramide		

Laxatives or Stool Softeners: When constipation is resistant to dietary measures, mild laxatives or stool softeners may be prescribed to facilitate bowel movements.

Antidiarrheal Agents: If diarrhea is severe or persistent, medications such as loperamide may be used temporarily to control symptoms.

Probiotics: Supplementation with probiotics can support gut flora balance and improve gastrointestinal tolerance to AOMs.

It is essential that these adjunctive therapies be managed by health care professionals to avoid interactions and ensure safety[4].

Conclusion

Highly effective AOMs represent a powerful tool in combating obesity and its related comorbidities.

However, their success depends on a holistic approach that integrates proper medication use, tailored dietary composition, strategies to manage side effects, and, when necessary, adjunctive pharmacologic interventions. Patients are encouraged to work closely with their health care team to personalize these recommendations, thereby maximizing the benefits of therapy while minimizing discomfort and risk.

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