

This Drug Plus Diet And Exercise Can Help Obese Adolescents

Combined with a low-calorie diet and exercise, orlistat (Xenical) can help overweight and obese adolescents lose weight and keep it off, a new study shows.

Researchers studied 539 patients ages 12 – 16

whose body mass index (BMI) was at least two points above the 95th percentile for their age and sex; this translates to a BMI

of about 29 for 12-year-olds and 32 for 16-year-olds. Subjects

were randomly assigned to receive either 120 mg of orlistat, which works by decreasing the body's absorption of fat, or placebo three times a day for a year. They were also put on a low-calorie diet and given behavioral therapy that identified cues for overeating and emphasized eating slowly and avoiding snacks. And they were given guidelines for an exercise program.

At 12 weeks, subjects in both groups lost weight and lowered their BMI. After that, however, BMI stabilized for those who took orlistat but rose to above baseline levels for those who received placebo.

Side effects of orlistat, which is approved for use in adults and adolescents ages 12 and older, include abdominal pain, flatulence, and loose stools.

Chanoine, J. P., Hampl, S., et al. (2005). Effect of orlistat on weight and body composition in obese adolescents: A randomized controlled trial. *JAMA*, 293(23), 2873.



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Error Watch

Errors With Coagulation Drugs Tend To Result In Serious Harm

Mistakes that involve blood coagulation modifiers (BCMs)—anticoagulants, thrombolytics, and antiplatelet agents—have a greater potential for harm than errors involving other types of drugs, according to the U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP).

From January 2001 through August 2004, 35,511 errors associated with BCMs were reported to the USP's MEDMARX program. Just over 22,000 of them reached patients, and 3.2% (1,129) caused harm, including 13 deaths. That's about twice the percentage of harmful errors for all records submitted to MEDMARX from 2001 – 2003. The BCMs most often involved in harmful errors were heparin (519 incidents), warfarin (358), enoxaparin (175), and clopidogrel (43).

Failure to follow an established protocol accounted for almost a quarter of the errors. The USP suggests that facilities examine their BCM procedures and protocols to identify areas in which clarity and feasibility, as well as staff training, can be improved. Nurses can also learn about the safe administration of these drugs from published guidelines, such as the American Heart Association's "Guide to anticoagulant therapy: Heparin," which is available online at www.guideline.gov/summary/summary.aspx?doc_id=5364&nbr=3667&string=Heparin.

THE AUTHORS

JOHN P. SANTELL, MS, RPh, is director, educational program initiatives, and SUSAN CAMP, PharmD, is a clinical data analyst at the U.S. Pharmacopeia Center for the Advancement of Patient Safety (CAPS). To learn more about the USP's two anonymous medication error reporting programs, click on www.usp.org/patientsafety.

STAFF EDITOR: JEFF BAUER

FDA Limits Access To Lung CA Drug Gefitinib

Due to questions about its effectiveness, gefitinib (Iressa) will no longer be prescribed to new patients; its use will be restricted to patients who currently benefit or have previously benefited from it, the FDA reports. The drug will also be available to patients in clinical trials.

