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# Slimmer

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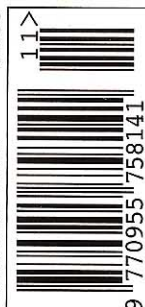
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While some weight-loss tablets make big claims, their side effects are not so desirable, says Emma Wells...

Is using a magic pill for a quick-fix solution to dropping a dress size, or shifting those last few stubborn pounds, a safe thing to do?

A quick browse on the internet and you'll be overwhelmed by the huge number of slimming pills and prescription drugs that promise the ultimate in fast and easy weight loss. From fat-blockers and metabolism-boosters to pills that prevent hunger, it seems there's something for everyone. When the frustration experienced from failing the latest

by obese people – those with a BMI above 30 – not those wanting to shift a few pounds. Websites require you to fill in a quick questionnaire with some personal details to help assess suitability, however many 'helpfully' let you know the answer you need to put in order to obtain the drugs. This can then lead to many a fraudulently obtained prescription. Other websites don't even go that far, and you can just click a few buttons and buy nearly half a year's supply worth £670 in one go!

Unrealistic claims such as "Lose 30lbs in just 30 days", "Lose weight while you sleep" and "Permanent weight loss" all help to pull people into this multi-million pound industry. But it often forgets to let them know about the health risks they may be taking and the side effects they may experience. The following are just a few well-known examples out there...

## Celevac (bulking agent)

**CLAIM:** Aids weight loss by reducing appetite

**HOW IT WORKS:** Taken with water before meals it swells in the stomach and reduces the appetite, resulting in lower calorie consumption.

**SIDE EFFECTS** There are no reported side effects from taking Celevac, but abdominal swelling and discomfort may occur if

# COULD slimming pills MAKE YOU ILL?

celebrity diet is coupled with the temptation to get maximum results with minimum effort, trying a quick-fix may simply be too good to resist!

So, how easy are these magical pills to get hold of? There is a vast array of slimming tools to choose from, some of which may be beneficial if used correctly. Yet some are addictive prescription drugs that are dangerous when in the wrong hands, and some have undesirable side effects such as anal leakage. Most are freely available to buy at the touch of a button on the internet and, within five minutes of searching, you can apply for 'anti-obesity drugs' with a promise of delivery within 48 hours. Of course there are strict prescribing rules. The majority is designed to be used only

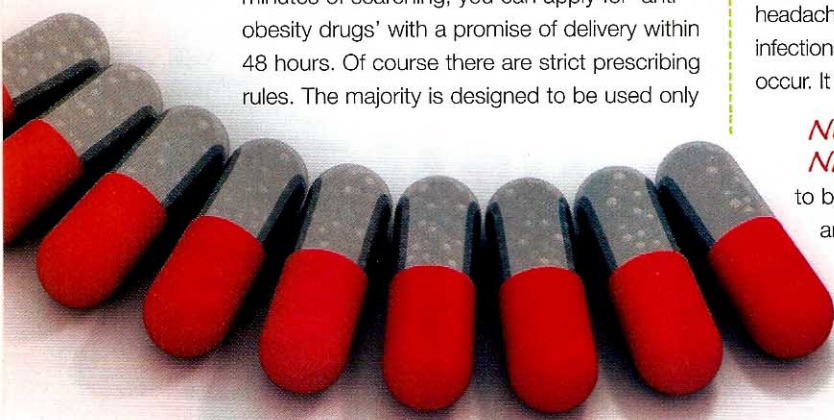
## Orlistat (lipase inhibitor)

**CLAIM:** Weight loss of around 1lb per week

**HOW IT WORKS:** It reduces the amount of fat that can be absorbed into the bloodstream by up to 30%. This corresponds to about 600 calories a day, which should lead to a weight-loss of about 1lb a week. Guidelines recommend it should only be used when a patient is obese and has shown that they are willing to make, or have made, dietary changes.

**SIDE EFFECTS** Urgent need to defecate and oily stools – this basically means messy, smelly leakage, so those white trousers are definitely out! Stomach upset, bloating, diarrhoea, flu and respiratory infections, headache, anxiety and fatigue, menstrual irregularities, and urinary tract infections, such as cystitis, are also symptoms. In rare cases, hepatitis can occur. It should definitely not be used in pregnancy and whilst breast-feeding.

**NUTRITION NIGHTMARE** Dieters generally believe that all fat is bad news, but it's actually the type and quantity that needs to be addressed. Omega 3 and 6 essential fatty acids, found in seeds and oily fish, are needed for immunity, skin and hormone health, and for metabolism to function correctly. Long-term use may lead to nutrient deficiencies, too. Vitamins A, D, E and K are all fat-soluble, and as Orlistat reduces fat absorption, the inclusion of these essential vitamins will, in turn, be lessened.

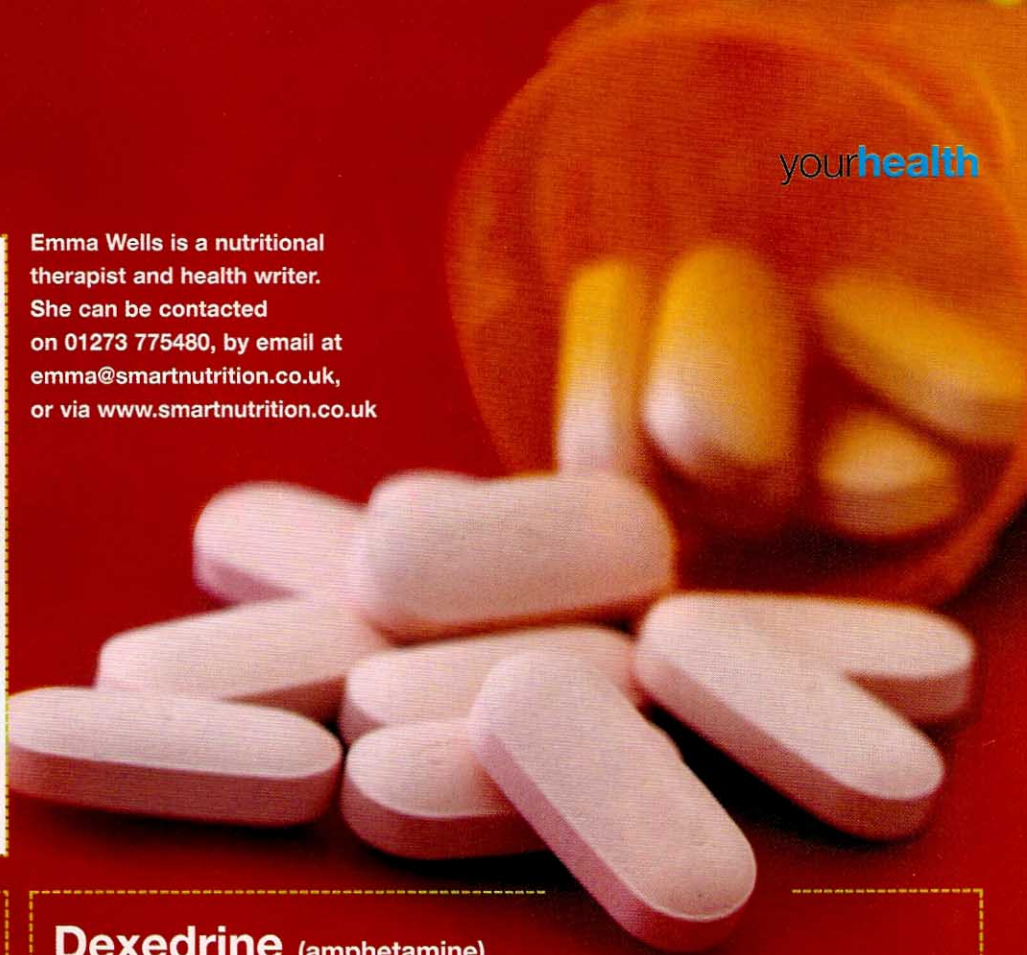




high levels of the drug build up in the bowel due to overdosing.

**NUTRITION NIGHTMARE** Sound like good news? Well it should work for short-term weight loss, but the long-term affects are not so desirable. Initially, if calories are severely restricted, the metabolism is slowed down. The body thinks disaster has struck and consequently goes into starvation mode, hanging on to all available calories. Once normal eating is resumed the metabolism stays shut down, making it more likely for the weight to pile back on – with some extra pounds on top! It can begin the on-set of yo-yo dieting, which has a list of detrimental health effects of its own.

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## Reductil (sympathomimetic drugs)

**CLAIM:** When used in combination with a reduced-calorie diet and appropriate physical activity, 77% of patients achieved weight loss that benefited their health.

**HOW IT WORKS:** It acts on the brain to raise levels of serotonin and noradrenaline, special types of messengers which help to give a feeling of satiety or fullness, thus reducing appetite.

### SIDE EFFECTS

Erratic heart rate and palpitations, high blood pressure, constipation, piles, nausea, insomnia, headache, anxiety and sweating. Reductil should never be used where there is a history of heart disease, anorexia, bulimia, binge eating, or alcohol or drug abuse, in pregnancy and whilst breast feeding. Buying this drug over the internet is especially dangerous, as blood pressure and pulse rates need to be checked every two weeks for the first three months of use.

**NUTRITION NIGHTMARE** Prescribing guidelines recommend that weight loss support is given alongside of this drug. Eating less of the wrong things may well see you drop some pounds, but if you don't change your food and lifestyle choices permanently then when you stop taking the drug the weight will simply pile back on again.

## Dexedrine (amphetamine)

**CLAIM:** Its real use is for those suffering from narcolepsy, a condition where the sufferer can fall asleep at any moment making their day-to-day routine incredibly dangerous. It works by helping them to stay awake, but being an amphetamine, it can also suppress appetite.

**HOW IT WORKS:** It literally speeds up your metabolism.

### SIDE EFFECTS

Loss of appetite, insomnia, high blood pressure, heart problems such as a rapid and erratic heart beat, euphoria,

psychosis, hallucinations, paranoia, uncontrollable twitching and jerking – need we go on? As well as being very addictive, the danger of overdose is high, especially when mixed with alcohol.

**NUTRITION NIGHTMARE** When you speed up your metabolism your body needs higher levels of nutrients to cope. However, as Dexedrine reduces your appetite you're less likely to eat, so long-term nutrient deficiencies are a high possibility.

## “UNREALISTIC CLAIMS SUCH AS “LOSE 30LBS IN JUST 30 DAYS” ALL HELP TO PULL PEOPLE INTO THIS MULTI-MILLION POUND INDUSTRY”

Unfortunately, there are no quick fixes for safe sustainable weight loss, although the slimming pills industry would have you think differently. The problem with using them is that they carry substantial risks to your health, and to some this isn't important – all that matters is losing weight. If that's you then it's time to wake up and get realistic. Changing your attitude towards food and adopting a healthy diet and lifestyle is much more likely to lead to long-term safe and sustainable weight loss. After all, if you don't change the way that you eat and your attitude towards it, then your weight can't really be expected to change either.