

While Medifast recognizes a potential benefit of alli™ during the Weight Maintenance phase, using alli™ during the Medifast 5 & 1 Plan or Transition phases of the program will probably provide little to no benefit as these phases are already low calorie and low fat. In clinical studies, alli™ users lost about 1-2 pounds per week and reduced total body weight 6-10 percent. Medifast users lost 2-5 pounds per week and reduced total body weight 10-15 percent; subjects with type 2 diabetes lost twice as much weight as subjects who received an American Diabetes Association diet, and 36 percent were able to discontinue their blood sugar medications entirely.

What is alli™?

Alli™ is the latest weight loss product to hit the market. It's an over-the-counter (OTC) weight loss drug that can help users can lose 50 percent more weight than dieting alone. Manufactured by the pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline, alli™ is the only FDA-approved OTC weight loss drug available to consumers in the United States. A similar drug called Xenical® hit the markets in 1999, but was (and still is) available only with a doctor's prescription.

Both Xenical® and alli™ contain the same active ingredient—orlistat—but prescription Xenical® contains more orlistat than OTC alli™. Orlistat belongs to a class of drugs called lipase inhibitors, which prevent the enzymes that break down fats from doing their job adequately. When dietary fats are not broken down properly, they cannot be absorbed through the intestinal wall and are instead eliminated in bowel movements. Less fat being absorbed means fewer calories being consumed. Consuming fewer calories will, in theory, result in weight loss. Alli™ blocks the absorption of dietary fat by about 25 percent and leads to a 5-10 percent weight loss over time (1).

Pound-for-Pound... How do Alli™ and Medifast Compare?

Both alli™ and Medifast have been scientifically tested in randomized controlled trials. Let's see how they compare:

Alli™

- **With alli™, expect a gradual, modest weight loss of about 1-2 pounds per week.**
- Long-term studies (1-2 years) show that participants who received orlistat at double the amount provided by alli™ experienced a loss of 6-10 percent of their total body weight, compared with those on placebos who lost 5 percent. In addition to weight loss, improvements in LDL cholesterol and blood pressure, as well as fasting insulin and blood sugar levels among diabetic subjects, have been shown (2-9).
- Alli™, however, has not come onto the market without its controversy. GlaxoSmithKline lists some "treatment effects" that can be very unpleasant for people using this weight loss aid. When people consume meals too high in fat (over 15 grams per meal), they may experience loose stools that are oily

and hard to control. Other treatment effects include an urgent need to go to the bathroom and gas with an oily discharge.

Medifast

- **With Medifast, the typical weight loss is 2-5 pounds per week.**
- Patients typically reduce body weight by approximately 10-15 percent and achieve improved health outcomes.
- A randomized controlled trial found that subjects with Type 2 diabetes receiving the Medifast Plus for Diabetics modified meal replacement diet lost **twice** as much weight after 34 weeks, compared with the group randomized to receive an American Diabetes Association diet.
- Subjects in this study also had significant reductions in blood glucose and insulin levels compared to pre-treatment values; after 86 weeks, 36 percent of subjects in the Medifast group were able to discontinue their blood sugar medications entirely (10).

Given these results, there appears to be very little reason why anyone would choose to take alli™ over Medifast. These results should also give one pause when deciding whether there is any benefit of adding a fat-blocker to an already low fat diet plan, such as the Medifast 5 & 1 Plan.

Medifast Recommendations For alli™

For those who are wondering whether adding alli™ to their Medifast Program would be a good idea, Medifast has the following general recommendations:

During 5 & 1 Plan & Transition

Alli™ will probably provide little to no benefit beyond what the Medifast 5 & 1 Plan or Transition Program will provide most people in terms of weight loss. Using alli™ during these phases of the program would be virtually pointless as they are already low calorie and low fat.

- The Medifast 5 & 1 Plan provides (on average) 15 grams of fat (or **135 calories** from fat) per day. Alli™ blocks 25 percent of fat calories, allowing for a reduction of **34 calories**.
- In addition to the minimal calorie savings on an already calorie-restricted, low fat program, the use of a fat blocking weight loss aid may cause a greater risk of deficiency of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K.

During Weight Maintenance

While not recommended during the Weight Loss or Transition phases, alli™ may be used as an adjunct during the Maintenance phase. During this final step of weight management, Medifast clients are advised to follow a calorie-controlled, balanced, low fat meal plan for maintaining their weight. Therefore, alli™ should not be needed as an ally. However, since additional calories and dietary fat are re-incorporated during this phase, it would be the best and most logical time to consider alli™ as an additional tool.

- For the typical Medifast client, the Weight Maintenance phase recommends (on average) 315 calories from fat per day. Alli™ blocks 25 percent of fat calories, allowing for a reduction of **79 calories**.

Summary

Medifast has been clinically tested and proven to be a **safe** and **effective** means of weight control, and has been recommended by over 15,000 physicians nationwide and used by more than one million overweight customers. While Medifast recognizes a potential benefit of alli™ as a tool during Weight Maintenance, one should think carefully about whether the potential benefits of this fat-blocker to an already low calorie, low fat diet plan are worth the expense and associated side effects.

References

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