SIBUTRAMINE FOR THE TREATMENT OF OBESITY IN ADULTS

What is sibutramine?

Sibutramine is taken in tablet form. The initial dose is 10 mg in the morning. If weight loss is disappointing after four weeks, the dose may be increased to 15 mg. Sibutramine should not be used for more than 12 consecutive months and may be stopped after three months if target weight loss is not achieved.

Unlike some other drugs for obesity, which work by changing the way the intestines absorb fats from the diet, sibutramine (Reductil) works in the brain by altering the chemical messages that control how a person feels and thinks about food. It mainly affects two chemicals called noradrenaline and serotonin and promotes a feeling of being full or having eaten enough.

Sibutramine causes increases in the blood pressure of some of the people who take it. Therefore, people who are prescribed sibutramine must have their blood pressure checked before they take it and at regular intervals during treatment. People with high blood pressure should not take sibutramine.

What is obesity?

A person is obese when they have a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 kg/m² or more.

A person is considered 'overweight' when they have a BMI of 25 - 30 kg/m².

BMI is calculated by dividing the person's weight in kg by the square of their height in metres. (Kg/m²).

e.g. Take your weight and convert it to kilograms (1stone =14lbs & 2.2lb=1kg)
Now take your height and convert it to metres (1 inch=0.025m) and multiply your height in metres by itself; then divide your weight in kilograms by this number

e.g. weight 76kg, height 1.70m

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{76}{(1.7x1.7)} = 26.3$$

The number of people in the population considered obese is increasing year-on-year.

Obesity has a major impact on a person's physical, social and emotional well-being. Besides this, obesity can lead to an increased chance of illness including Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure (hypertension), cardiovascular diseases and stroke. Obesity can also play a role in cancer, problems with sexual-function, mental health, muscle and bone disorders and psychological problems.

Currently, treatment options for obesity include advice on diet, low and very low calorie diets, modifying behaviour, counselling and exercise. The two drugs currently licensed
to treat obesity are Sibutramine and Orlistat (See the leaflet Orlistat for Obesity). Bariatric Surgery to restrict the size of the stomach is increasingly being used. Other surgical techniques are sometimes used e.g. gastric bands.

What is NICE guidance?

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) is a part of the NHS. It produces guidance for both the NHS and patients on medicines, medical equipment, diagnostic tests and clinical & surgical procedures and where they should be used.

When the Institute evaluates, it is called an appraisal. Each appraisal takes around 12 months to complete and involves the manufacturers of the drug or device, the professional organisations and the groups who represent patients.

NICE was asked to look at the available evidence on sibutramine and provide guidance that would help the NHS in England and Wales decide where it should be used in the treatment of obesity in adults.

What has NICE recommended about the use of sibutramine?

To see the most recent NICE Guidance on the treatment of obesity and the use of Sibutramine, follow this link:

http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/CG43

What should I do? If you, or someone you care for, are obese then you should discuss a management plan with the doctor or nurse at your next appointment.