

# Nutrition News

Department of Human Nutrition



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## Alli: Friend or Foe?

Alli, the only FDA approved over-the-counter weight loss product, is being marketed as a safe and effective weight-loss drug. Alli is for weight loss in overweight adults, 18 years of age and older.

When used in conjunction with a low-fat diet and regular exercise, Alli claims to increase weight loss results by 50% when compared to dieting alone. For example, if a person could lose 5 pounds with dieting, they would lose an additional 2-3 pounds with dieting and Alli. According to the manufacturer, most people in their studies lost 5-10 pounds over a 6-month period.

Alli is not an appetite suppressant. One-half the strength of the prescription drug Xenical (used to treat obesity) and marketed under a different name, Alli works in the digestive system by

blocking the absorption of fat, thus decreasing the number of calories absorbed. Due to this fat blocking ability, persons taking this product may experience side effects such as some gas with oily spotting, loose oily stools, or more frequent stools that may be hard to control.

Alli can be taken up to 3 times a day with meals. To decrease the side effects associated with this product, the manufacturer recommends consuming no more than 15 grams of fat with each meal.

Alli's fat blocking ability may also contribute to the decreased absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K. Deficiencies in these nutrients are associated with increased risk of infections, impaired night vision, muscle weakness, anemia, weak bones, and bruising. Taking a multi-vitamin at a

time other than when Alli is being taken, preferably at bedtime, may help prevent deficiencies of the fat-soluble vitamins.

People who are not overweight, have had an organ transplant, or have problems absorbing food should not take Alli. Also, anyone being treated for thyroid disease or diabetes or taking blood thinners should consult their health care provider before taking Alli.

If a person is willing to work hard to gradually lose weight, commit to following a low-fat, reduced-calorie diet, commit to eating smaller portion sizes, and make time to be physically active, Alli claims that it can then help them be successful at losing weight. However, if a person is willing to do those things, it is highly possible that they can successfully lose weight without Alli and its side effects.

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office.  
The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet.  
To find out more, call toll-free 1-888-369-4777.

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