**Coverage Request for Obesity Medications**

What you can do to help patients gain access obesity medication coverage is different from what you may be used to. Similar to smoking-cessation therapies or prescription vitamins, an employer makes a decision to opt in to coverage in addition to its base plan. If a patient’s insurance plan doesn’t include obesity medications, there are still options. You can help appropriate patients gain access by providing coverage request documentation that your patients can bring to their human resources department. This includes a professional letter affirming that your patient may benefit from obesity medications. Use the following sample coverage request letter as a guide for what you may write to a patient’s HR department. Once the letter is completed, your patient will need to deliver it to his or her employer.

**SAMPLE COVERAGE REQUEST LETTER**

*The example below is for your reference only. When drafting a coverage request letter, it should be written on your letterhead. This form should* ***NOT*** *be used as the coverage request letter.*

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter on behalf of my patient, John Doe, to express a concern. My patient is in need of an obesity medication that is currently not covered by your insurance plan. Obesity is a multi-factorial chronic disease requiring a comprehensive approach to both prevent and treat. Obesity is associated with a large number of other conditions such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, lipid disorders, certain cancers, sleep apnea, arthritis and mental illness. Therefore, care should not be seen as simply having the goal of reducing body weight, but should additionally be focused on improving overall health and quality of life.

Similar to many other medical conditions, obesity is a complex disease, which requires a multidisciplinary treatment and team approach. This approach must encompass the best standards of care, including treatments chosen, care coordination and the clinical environment in which services are delivered. The multidisciplinary obesity care team encompasses all qualified disciplines and professionals (both physician and non-physician) across treatment areas.

Patients struggling with weight may find that lifestyle changes including healthy eating plan and regular physical activity are not enough to help them lose weight or maintain weight loss. Obesity deserves the same treatment and attention as any other chronic illness. Please contact your health plan or pharmacy benefit manager to pursue coverage for either this individual employee or for the company at large. You can find more helpful information about obesity medications on the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases [website](https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/prescription-medications-treat-overweight-obesity) and have included an approved list of medications below for your reference.

***Your support may mean employers will cover obesity medications*** ***not only for 1 patient, but for an entire community.***

[**Prescription Medications Approved for Overweight and Obesity Treatment**](https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/prescription-medications-treat-overweight-obesity) **(\*Provided by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases website)**

| **Weight-loss medication** | **Approved for** | **How it works** | **Common side effects** | **Warnings** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| [Orlistat](https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a601244.html) (Xenical)  Available in lower dose without prescription (Alli) | Adults and children ages 12 and older | Works in your gut to reduce the amount of fat your body absorbs from the food you eat | * diarrhea * gas * leakage of oily stools * stomach pain | Rare cases of severe liver injury have been reported. Avoid taking with [cyclosporine](https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a601207.html) . Take a multivitamin pill daily to make sure you get enough of certain vitamins that your body may not absorb from the food you eat. |
| [Lorcaserin](https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a613014.html) (Belviq) | Adults | Acts on the serotonin receptors in your brain. May help you feel full after eating smaller amounts of food. | * constipation * cough * dizziness * dry mouth * feeling tired * headaches * nausea | Tell your doctor if you take antidepressants or migraine medications, since some of these can cause problems when taken together. |
| [Phentermine-topiramate](https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a612037.html) (Qsymia) | Adults | A mix of two medications: phentermine, which lessens your appetite, and topiramate, which is used to treat seizures or migraine headaches. May make you less hungry or feel full sooner. | * constipation * dizziness * dry mouth * taste changes, especially with carbonated beverages * tingling of your hands and feet * trouble sleeping | Don’t use if you have [glaucoma](https://www.niddk.nih.gov/Dictionary/G/glaucoma) or [hyperthyroidism](https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/endocrine-diseases/hyperthyroidism). Tell your doctor if you have had a heart attack or stroke, abnormal heart rhythm, kidney disease, or mood problems.  MAY LEAD TO BIRTH DEFECTS. DO NOT TAKE QSYMIA IF YOU ARE PREGNANT OR PLANNING A PREGNANCY. Do not take if you are breastfeeding. |
| [Naltrexone-bupropion](https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a695033.html) (Contrave) | Adults | A mix of two medications: naltrexone, which is used to treat alcohol and drug dependence, and bupropion, which is used to treat depression or help people quit smoking. May make you feel less hungry or full sooner. | * constipation * diarrhea * dizziness * dry mouth * headache * increased blood pressure * increased heart rate * insomnia * liver damage * nausea * vomiting | Do not use if you have uncontrolled high blood pressure, seizures or a history of [anorexia](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000362.htm) or [bulimia nervosa](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000341.htm) . Do not use if you are dependent on [opioid pain medications](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007489.htm) or withdrawing from drugs or alcohol. Do not use if you are taking bupropion (Wellbutrin, Zyban).  MAY INCREASE SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR ACTIONS. |
| [Liraglutide](https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a611003.html) (Saxenda)  Available by injection only | Adults | May make you feel less hungry or full sooner. At a lower dose under a different name, Victoza, FDA-approved to treat type 2 diabetes. | * nausea * diarrhea * constipation * abdominal pain * headache * raised pulse | May increase the chance of developing [pancreatitis](https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/pancreatitis). Has been found to cause a rare type of thyroid tumor in animals. |
| Other medications that curb your desire to eat include   * phentermine * benzphetamine * diethylpropion * phendimetrazine | Adults | Increase chemicals in your brain to make you feel you are not hungry or that you are full.   **Note:** FDA-approved only for short-term use—up to 12 weeks | * dry mouth * constipation * difficulty sleeping * dizziness * feeling nervous * feeling restless * headache * raised blood pressure * raised pulse | Do not use if you have heart disease, uncontrolled high blood pressure, hyperthyroidism, or glaucoma. Tell your doctor if you have severe anxiety or other mental health problems. |