

A new option for weight loss

You may have been hearing a lot lately about new medications for weight loss. Wegovy is a once-a-week injectable medication that is FDA approved for obesity. This medication is also used for treatment for diabetes under the name Ozempic. The generic name is semaglutide. Semaglutide is a GLP-1 receptor agonist (glucagon-like peptide). It works by increasing insulin release in response to a meal and slowing how fast your stomach empties. It limits appetite by mimicking a hormone signal to our bodies that we feel full, therefore decreasing intake of food. In the studies done on Wegovy, those who got the medication lost an average of 15 percent of their body weight, compared to 2.5% of body weight in those who got the placebo. More than one third of patients who got the drug lost more than 20% of their body weight, which is significantly better than any of our previous weight loss medications. 10-15% weight loss can help improve a significant number of medication conditions, including high blood pressure, diabetes/prediabetes, acid reflux, sleep apnea and arthritis, so this is exciting news!

Everyone in the studies was given counseling to help adhere to a reduced calorie diet as well as encouraged to increase their physical activity to 150 minutes a week.

It is important to realize that this medication is approved for patients with a BMI greater or equal to 30 or for patients with a BMI above 27 with at least one obesity related disease (such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes). It is not meant for patients who are at a normal weight to use to become thinner.

Obesity is a chronic disease that will require lifelong treatment and lifestyle management for most people. Follow up studies of Wegovy do show that most participants steadily gained the weight back when they stopped the medication.

Side effects are common, particularly at higher doses, and most commonly include nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Wegovy is started at a low dose and then increased monthly to try to minimize these side effects. Some people will not be able to tolerate higher doses but can continue the lower doses if they are losing weight.

These medications cannot be taken when you are pregnant or if you have a personal or family history of medullary thyroid carcinoma or a disorder called multiple endocrine neoplasia. Rarely it can cause pancreatitis, and it can also increase your risk for gallstones slightly.

This medication marks a big step forward for treatment of obesity. However, there are some barriers to be aware of at this time.

Currently there is a shortage of Wegovy, so new patients cannot be started on it. The company hopes to have this situation improved early next year. Also, Wegovy is very expensive at a cash pay price of about \$1400 a month.

Some commercial insurance plans cover it for appropriate patients (typically with a prior authorization) which is great, but quite a few do not. In addition, Medicare Part D plans do not cover weight loss medications.

Patients who have Type 2 Diabetes may be able to get coverage for the version approved for diabetes treatment (Ozempic), but unfortunately there has been a recent shortage of this medication as well.

You may have also heard of another medication called Mounjaro (terzepatide). This is an even newer medication. It is a combination of a GLP-1 agonist and a new type of medication called a GIP (glucose dependent insulinotropic polypeptide) receptor agonist. It is also a once a week injection and has a similar side effect profile to Wegovy.

It is currently approved ONLY for Type 2 Diabetes. However a study done in obese patients without diabetes showed even more benefit for weight loss, as participants lost an average of 22% of their body weight. It will likely be approved for patients with obesity without diabetes in the future, but is **not** an option now.

Hopefully, with competition between these and other similar medications, the cost will become more affordable and covered by insurance companies so that most patients who could benefit from them will have access to them in the future.

There are still other FDA approved oral medications for treatment of obesity for those who are unable to get Wegovy or do not want to do injections, including Qysmia, Contrave, and Orlistat.

In addition, our NTPHP dietitians are available to work with patients to help with healthy diet advice.

As always, before embarking on any significant change in your diet, medications or supplements, please consult your personal physician.

Administrative Update:

Happy New Year! We are excited to announce the opening of our newest office in Dallas on January 1, 2023. Please join us in welcoming Anita Khetan MD, Rainer Khetan MD, Roger Khetan, MD and Cynthia Wilder MD, who previously practiced together in a Dallas-based Internal Medicine practice. They are joined by our Rheumatologist, Riteesha Reddy MD, and are located at 3900 Junius, Suite 415, just down the street from our Gaston location.

Preferred Health Partners Locations

Dallas -Gaston Office

3417 Gaston Ave.
Suite 700
Dallas, Texas 75246
214-823-4800

Dallas- Junius Office

3900 Junius Street
Suite 415
Dallas, Texas 75246
972-993-8300

Park Cities Office

8215 Westchester Dr,
Ste 320
Dallas, Texas 75225
972-993-5040

Plano Office

4708 Dexter Dr.,
Suite 400
Plano, Texas 75093
972-993-5050

Las Colinas Office

440 West I-635
Suite 405
Irving, Texas 75063
972-993-5080

Frisco Office

3535 Victory Group Way,
Ste 330
Frisco, Texas 75034
972-993-5070

Austin Office

1305 West 34th St.,
Suite 204
Austin, Texas 78705
737-285-3770

HEALTHY HABITS

Italian Sausage Soup

Ingredients

- 2 strips bacon, diced medium (optional)
- 1 cup yellow onion, finely diced
- 1 lb Italian chicken or turkey sausage
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 2 tbsp arrowroot flour
- 32 oz. carton of chicken broth
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning
- 2 cups peeled russet potatoes, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 bunch lacinato kale, ripped from stem and chopped (~4 cups)
- 1 cup Nut Pods Original Dairy-Free Creamer
- 1 tbsp nutritional yeast
- Juice of 1 lemon

Directions

1. Heat a large pot over medium heat. Add bacon and cook, stirring occasionally, until bacon is just crispy. Once cooked, transfer bacon to a paper towel-lined plate and set aside. While reserving the bacon fat in the pot. NOTE: you can skip this step and just heat 2Tbsp olive or avocado oil in the pot.
2. Add onion, garlic, salt, pepper, and sausage into the pot. Cook, breaking up meat with back of spoon, until cooked and no longer pink. About 4-5 minutes.
3. Add arrowroot into the sausage vegetable mixture and stir until well incorporated. While stirring, slowly pour in chicken broth. Bring the soup to a boil.
4. Reduce heat to simmer, add the Italian seasoning, chopped kale and potatoes. Cook, covered, until potatoes are tender, about 10 to 15 minutes.
5. When the potatoes are tender, remove the lid from the pot and stir in the creamer, nutritional yeast, and lemon. Cook for 5 more minutes, simmering uncovered, just to mend the flavors and the cream.
6. Serve in bowls topped with the cooked bacon if using and enjoy!

This soup is great to make ahead of time and freeze to have on a hand for a quick lunch of weeknight meal!