

OZEMPIC / SEMAGLUTIDE FACT SHEET

Ozempic is a brand name for semaglutide. It is a prescription-only diabetes medication, available as an injection pen.¹ It is recommended by NICE in the UK for people with type 2 diabetes.²

Semaglutide is a GLP1-analogue. It increases the levels of incretin hormones, which help the body produce more insulin when needed. It also suppresses the amount of glucose produced by the liver.³

Studies showed that people with diabetes who use Ozempic can experience weight loss, because the drug also reduces appetite and slows the movement of food through the gut - so the feeling of “fullness” lasts longer.⁴

There is currently a shortage of Ozempic due to it being prescribed “off label” as a weight loss drug. UK government advice is that Ozempic should only be prescribed for the treatment of type 2 diabetes to protect supply for diabetes patients. It should not be prescribed solely for weight loss.⁵

In the US, the FDA approved semaglutide for weight loss in 2021, under the brand name Wegovy. In the UK, Wegovy became available on the NHS for weight loss in September, 2023.

Wegovy has a higher dose of semaglutide than Ozempic.

Wegovy has 2.4 mg of semaglutide. The induction dose is 0.25 mg, this is increased every 4 weeks to 0.5 mg, 1.0 mg, 1.7 mg and 2.4 mg, with a maintenance dose of 2.4 mg.⁶

Ozempic comes in 0.5 mg, 1 mg or 2 mg doses. The induction dose is 0.25 mg once weekly for 4 weeks, this is increased to 0.5 mg once weekly for at least 4 weeks, then increased if necessary to 1 mg once weekly.⁷

“Patients are eligible for treatment within a specialist weight management service if they have at least one weight-related comorbidity, such as hypertension or cardiovascular disease, and either a BMI of at least 35 or a BMI of 30 to 34.9, provided they meet the criteria for referral to specialist weight management services, including that conventional treatment has been unsuccessful.” UK Gov website.

¹ gov.uk health blog, 4th September 2023

² Diabetes UK

³ Diabetes UK

⁴ “Two-year effects of semaglutide in adults with overweight or obesity: the STEP 5 trial”, Nature, 10th October 2022

⁵ UK Government Department of Health statement, September 2023.

⁶ NICE

⁷ NICE

GLP-1 medications like Ozempic are designed for long-term use because they are chronic medications for the treatment of chronic conditions – diabetes and obesity. In the UK, NICE recommends the use of Wegovy for two years only.