GLP-1 AGONISTS:
What you need to know

KINGSWAY NATUROPATHIC CLINIC

A Patient Information Guide

What Are GLP-1 Agonists?

GLP-1 agonists are medications that mimic your body's natural hormone GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide-1). This hormone is released after eating & plays a key role in controlling blood sugar, appetite, & digestion.

Common GLP-1 medications include:

- **Semaglutide** (Ozempic®, Wegovy®)
- **Tirzepatide** (Mounjaro®, Zepbound® – GLP-1 + GIP dual agonist)
- **Liraglutide** (Victoza®, Saxenda®)
- **Dulaglutide** (Trulicity®)
- **Exenatide** (Byetta®, Bydureon®)

These medications come as once-daily or once-weekly injections, & some newer versions are available orally.

Who May Benefit From GLP-1 Agonists?

These medications may be recommended for those with:

• **Type 2 Diabetes**
Improve blood sugar control & reduce A1C levels.

• **Obesity or Overweight (BMI ⩾ 27 + comorbidities)**
Effective for weight loss when combined with nutrition, movement, & lifestyle support.

• **Metabolic Syndrome**
Help improve blood sugar, cholesterol, blood pressure, & central body fat.

• **Cardiovascular Risk**
Some GLP-1s are specifically approved to reduce major cardiac events.

Who Should Not Take GLP-1s?

GLP-1 Agonists should not be used in people with:

- Personal or family history of medullary thyroid cancer (MTC)
- MEN-2 (Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia syndrome type 2)
- Recurrent pancreatitis
- Severe GI disease (e.g., gastroparesis)
- Pregnant or breastfeeding (discuss with your provider)

reception@drkim.ca
604-525-0600
Created by Dr. Elise Fair

How Do GLP-1 Agonists Work?

These medications support weight, blood sugar, & metabolic health through multiple mechanisms:

1. Help Control Hunger
- Slow stomach emptying → you feel full longer
- Reduce appetite signals in the brain
- Decrease cravings & overeating

2. Improve Blood Sugar
- Increase insulin release when blood sugar rises
- Reduce glucagon (a hormone that raises blood sugar)
- Smooth out both fasting & post-meal blood glucose levels

3. Support Weight Loss
- Reduce caloric intake without feeling deprived
- Improve insulin sensitivity
- Help preserve lean muscle (when paired with protein + strength training)

4. Improve Cardiovascular Health
- Large clinical trials show GLP-1s:
- Reduce risk of heart attack, stroke, & cardiovascular death
- Lower inflammation, blood pressure, & body fat

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Will I lose muscle?
Only if you undereat protein or skip strength training. With proper support, many patients can preserve or gain lean mass.

2. How long do I need to stay on it?
It depends on your goals, metabolic health, & medical conditions.
Many patients transition off after reaching a stable, sustainable weight.

3. Do I need to follow a specific diet?
No — but high-protein, fiber-rich, whole-foods work best.

4. How fast will I feel results?
Appetite reduction can begin within days; weight & metabolic changes build gradually over weeks to months.

5. What happens if I stop the medication?
Without lifestyle habits in place, weight regain can happen. However, patients who build strong nutrition & exercise habits tend to keep most of the weight off even after stopping. If coming off a GLP-1, a taper & structured lifestyle plan makes the transition smoother.

Common Side Effects

These occur because the medication slows digestion.

Most Common (usually improve with time):

- Nausea
- Bloating
- Reflux
- Early fullness
- Mild diarrhea or constipation

Less Common:

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Injection site irritation

Rare but Serious:

- Gallbladder disease
- Pancreatitis
- Significant dehydration (from prolonged vomiting)
- Very low blood sugar (mainly if used with insulin or sulfonylureas)

How to Reduce Side Effects

- Eat slowly & stop when comfortably full
- Choose small, protein-forward meals
- Avoid high-fat, fried, or greasy meals
- Stay well hydrated
- Take ginger, peppermint tea, or B6 if nauseated
- Don't lie down after eating
- Follow recommended slow dose titration steps

Lifestyle Is Foundational

GLP-1s work best when paired with:

• **Adequate Protein**
Helps maintain muscle mass (aim for 1.2-1.6 g/kg/day).

• **Strength Training 2-4x/week**
Prevents muscle loss, boosts metabolism, enhances long-term results.

• **Whole Foods, Fiber, Hydration**
Supports digestion & decreases side effects.

• **Stress, Sleep & Hormone Support**
Improves appetite regulation, cravings, & metabolism.

Expected Results

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Results vary depending on dose, duration, & lifestyle

Weight Loss:

• Semaglutide: ~15% of body weight on average
• Tirzepatide: 18-22% on average

Blood Sugar:

• A1C reductions of ~1-2%

Cardiovascular:

• Up to 20% risk reduction in major cardiac events

Most changes occur gradually over 3-12 months.

What to Expect



Weeks 1-2

- Decreased appetite
- Early fullness
- Occasional nausea
- Burping, mild bloating
- Weight changes: often 1-4 lbs

Weeks 3-4

- Stronger appetite control
- Taste changes (sweet foods feel too sweet)
- Smaller meal portions
- More consistent blood sugar

Weeks 5-8

- Steady weight loss
- Side effects diminish
- Improved energy
- Better sleep, less snoring (from reduced visceral fat)

"What If I Plateau?"

Plateaus are normal. Common causes:

- Under-eating calories/protein
- Low water intake
- Constipation
- High stress/cortisol
- Poor sleep
- Medication dose not yet optimized

Solutions:

- Increase hydration
- Increase fiber
- Track meals for 3 days
- Adjust dose if medically appropriate

WHEN TO SEE YOUR DOCTOR



Seek care immediately if you experience:

- Severe abdominal pain radiating to the back
- Persistent vomiting (can't keep liquids down)
- Dark urine or yellowing of skin/eyes
- Fever with abdominal pain
- Signs of dehydration
- Black stools, vomiting blood
- Heart racing + dizziness

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