

LMC Guide to GLP-1 Therapy

A GLP-1, or glucagon-like peptide-1, is a natural hormone that helps your body keep blood sugars in balance. As a medication, it can be taken as a pill or an injection.

Common brands:

- Ozempic, Wegovy, and Rybelsus (semaglutide)
- Victoza and Saxenda (liraglutide)
- Trulicity (dulaglutide)
- Mounjaro (tirzepatide)

Benefits:

GLP-1 treatments have been shown to lower **blood sugars and A1c**, reduce the risk of **cardiovascular disease**, and slow the progression of **chronic kidney disease and kidney failure**. Many people have also found that it reduces cravings and appetite, which can lead to **weight loss**.

How it works:

1. It helps the pancreas release more insulin to lower blood sugars.
2. It helps the liver release less sugar into the blood, which can lower blood sugars.
3. It slows digestion and keeps you feeling fuller for longer, which allows carbohydrates to go into the blood at a slower pace, reducing post-meal blood sugar spikes.
4. It reduces appetite, which can lead to weight loss

Side Effects include:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| - Nausea | - Vomiting |
| - Constipation | - Diarrhea |
| - Gas and bloating | - Muscle loss |



Managing side effects:

1. Eat small, high protein meals or snacks every 2-3 hours to prevent nausea and/or vomiting.
2. Avoid sugary drinks, and limit alcohol and caffeine, which can worsen diarrhea. Choose water, decaffeinated tea or coffee, or sugar-free juice to stay hydrated.
3. To prevent gas and bloating, eat slowly and chew your food well. Avoid drinking through a straw or drinking carbonated beverages.
4. Adding soluble fibre into your diet can help with constipation. This includes oats, barley, lentils, legumes, vegetables and fruit.

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Did you know?

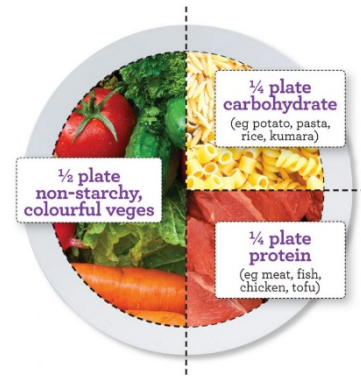
When you lose weight on a GLP-1, you are likely losing both fat *and* muscle. This is why it's important eat well and exercise regularly to maintain muscle.

Here are some important lifestyle recommendations for people taking a GLP-1:

1. Protein

Include a protein source at each meal and snack. This is because protein maintains and builds muscle, keeps you feeling fuller for longer, and helps with post-meal blood sugar control.

Protein sources include Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, block cheese, eggs and egg whites, tofu, beans and legumes, fish, chicken, and red meat.



If your appetite is lower but you know you should eat something, trying having one scoop of protein powder mixed in water or low fat milk, a high protein Glucerna chilled over ice, or $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of plain Greek yogurt with a spoon of sugar-free jam.

2. Resistance Exercise

Doing resistance training 2-3 x per week can build and strengthen your muscles. Walking is great exercise, but it doesn't build muscle. Try adding some resistance training into your exercise routine to help keep your muscles strong. Having more muscle, especially as we age, reduces the risk of falls and fractures, and it also burns calories and blood sugar while we rest



You don't need to join a gym to do resistance exercises.

Don't know how to start? Check out Diabetes Canada resistance training

If you have more questions, talk to your endocrinologist or Diabetes

Educator. <https://www.diabetes.ca/resources/tools-resources/resistance-exercise-videos>

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3. Medication adjustments

If you are taking insulin, you may need to reduce your dose when using a GLP-1. Your doctor may discuss this with you before it's prescribed and review how to make insulin reductions. If you notice more frequent low blood sugars, contact your endocrinologist or diabetes educator for guidance.

4. Other tips to consider

Similar to blood pressure pills and diabetes medications, taking a GLP-1 is a lifelong commitment. The best results are achieved when medication is combined with positive lifestyle changes. If the medication is stopped, weight regain and a change in blood sugars is common.

If you find it difficult to meet your dietary needs before going on a GLP-1, this medication may not be the right choice for you. Starting a GLP-1 may put more restrictions on your food choices because the medication leads to a decline in appetite, food cravings, and an overall interest in food.