

Nutrition Considerations for People Taking GLP-1 Medications



GLP-1 medications have become an increasingly popular and effective tool for managing weight, blood sugar, and overall metabolic health. While these medications can be powerful, nutrition plays a critical role in maximizing benefits, minimizing side effects, and supporting training performance and recovery. If you're taking a GLP-1 medication—or considering one—understanding how to fuel your body properly can make a significant difference in how you feel, how you train, and the results you achieve.

What Are GLP-1 Medications?

GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide-1) receptor agonists are a class of medications originally developed to treat type 2 diabetes and now widely used for weight management. Common examples include semaglutide, tirzepatide, liraglutide, and dulaglutide.

GLP-1 medications work by:

- Slowing gastric emptying (food leaves the stomach more slowly)
- Increasing feelings of fullness and satiety
- Reducing appetite and food cravings
- Improving insulin sensitivity and blood sugar regulation

Because these medications change how digestion and appetite function, nutrition strategies—especially for active individuals—often need to be adjusted.

Why Nutrition Matters Even More on GLP-1s

Many people taking GLP-1 medications eat significantly less than before. While appetite reduction can support weight loss, it also increases the risk of:

- Inadequate protein intake
- Loss of lean muscle mass
- Reduced training performance
- Fatigue, dizziness, or weakness
- Micronutrient deficiencies

For individuals who lift weights, do cardio, or train consistently, **eating less without a plan can work against progress**. The goal is not just weight loss—it's weight loss while preserving strength, muscle, and energy.

Foods to Prioritize on a GLP-1

Protein: The Cornerstone of Nutrition

Protein should be the top nutritional priority for anyone taking a GLP-1, especially those who are exercising.

Adequate protein intake helps:

- Preserve lean muscle during weight loss
- Support recovery and performance
- Improve satiety with smaller meals
- Maintain metabolic health

High-quality protein sources include:

- Lean meats (chicken, turkey, lean beef)
- Fish and seafood
- Eggs and egg whites
- Greek yogurt and cottage cheese
- Tofu, tempeh, and edamame
- Protein shakes or powders (often better tolerated when appetite is low)

A helpful strategy is to **start meals with protein** before moving on to carbohydrates or fats.

Fiber-Rich Foods (Introduced Gradually)

Fiber supports gut health, blood sugar control, and digestion—but GLP-1 medications slow digestion, which means too much fiber too quickly can worsen bloating or nausea.

Well-tolerated fiber sources include:

- Cooked vegetables
- Berries
- Oats
- Chia seeds
- Lentils and beans (small portions)

Hydration is essential when increasing fiber intake.

Healthy Fats (In Moderation)

Fats are necessary for hormone health and nutrient absorption, but large amounts—especially in one sitting—can increase GI discomfort on GLP-1s.

Choose smaller portions of:

- Olive oil
- Avocado
- Nuts and seeds
- Fatty fish like salmon

Spreading fat intake across meals often improves tolerance.

Hydration and Electrolytes

Reduced appetite often leads to reduced fluid intake. Dehydration can contribute to fatigue, constipation, and poor workout performance.

Hydration tips:

- Sip water consistently throughout the day
- Consider electrolytes if training intensely or experiencing dizziness

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- Be mindful of excessive caffeine intake

Foods to Limit or Avoid

Highly Processed and Sugary Foods

These foods offer little nutritional value and can worsen nausea, reflux, or blood sugar swings.

Large, High-Fat Meals

Large meals—especially those high in fat—can cause significant discomfort due to slowed digestion.

Alcohol

Alcohol tolerance is often reduced on GLP-1 medications and may increase nausea, dehydration, or low blood sugar.

Macro Nutrition Guidelines for Active Individuals on GLP-1 Medications

For people who are training regularly, macro balance becomes critical. Reduced appetite combined with exercise increases the risk of under-fueling and muscle loss if nutrition is not intentional.

Rather than rigid rules, these guidelines provide flexible ranges to support performance and recovery.

Protein: The Non-Negotiable Macro

Recommended intake:

- **0.7–1.0 grams per pound of goal body weight per day**

Protein supports muscle preservation, recovery, and metabolic health. If appetite is low, consistency matters more than perfection—hitting the lower end daily is better than sporadic high days.

Carbohydrates: Fuel for Training

Carbohydrates are often unintentionally under-eaten on GLP-1s, especially during weight loss. For active individuals, this can impair workouts and recovery.

General guidance:

- Intake varies based on training intensity and volume
- Emphasize carbs around workouts
- Choose easily digestible sources

Quality carb sources include:

- Rice, potatoes, oats
- Fruit
- Whole grains (as tolerated)
- Legumes in moderate portions

Fats: Supportive but Secondary

General guidance:

- About **20–30% of total daily intake**
- Focus on quality sources and moderate portions

Avoid very high-fat meals, particularly before training or late at night.

Understanding a Macro Calculator (Without the Math)

A macro calculator is a tool that helps estimate how much protein, carbohydrates, and fat your body needs based on individual factors. While calculators don't replace professional guidance, they provide a useful starting framework.

A typical macro calculator considers:

- **Goal body weight**
- **Activity level** (frequency, intensity, and type of training)
- **Primary goal** (fat loss, muscle maintenance, performance)
- **Age and sex**
- **Estimated calorie needs**

From this information, the calculator:

1. Establishes a calorie range appropriate for your goal
2. Sets protein first to support muscle and recovery
3. Allocates carbohydrates to fuel activity
4. Fills in fats to support hormones and satiety

For individuals on GLP-1 medications, macro calculators are best used to:

- Ensure minimum protein needs are met
- Prevent excessive calorie restriction
- Support training performance
- Maintain lean mass during weight loss

Many people find value in tracking intake temporarily—not forever—to confirm they are fueling adequately.

Signs Your Macros May Need Adjustment

- Persistent fatigue or low energy
- Declining strength or endurance
- Poor workout recovery
- Muscle loss or “soft” weight loss
- Lightheadedness during exercise

If these occur, the solution is often **more fuel—not less**.

Final Takeaway

GLP-1 medications can be a powerful tool for improving metabolic health and supporting weight loss—but **they do not eliminate your body's need for fuel**, especially if you are training.

Prioritizing protein, fueling workouts with carbohydrates, keeping fats moderate, and ensuring adequate hydration can help you:

- Lose weight sustainably
- Preserve muscle and strength
- Improve workout performance
- Feel better day to day

Medication can influence appetite—but **nutrition determines outcomes**.

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