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For Naturopathic Medicine & Functional Nutrition

Six Pillars for GLP-1 Medications for Weight Management

How They Work

Semaglutide and Tirzepatide injectable medications, sometimes referred to as GLP-1 medications, are medications used for type 2 diabetes management and weight management. They work by mimicking a natural hormone in the body called GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide-1).

When you eat, your natural GLP-1 hormone is released into the bloodstream and:

- Reduces feelings of hunger, making you feel full and satisfied, by traveling to the hypothalamus and activating receptors in the brain.
- Slows down the movement of food through the stomach, reducing gastric emptying. This means food stays in your stomach longer, making you feel full for a longer time.
- Helps to control blood sugar levels by directing the pancreas to release insulin.

When your natural GLP-1 isn't working well, Semaglutide and Tirzepatide injectable medications can step in to keep hunger, fullness, and blood sugar well-regulated. They mimic the GLP-1 hormone in your body and activate GLP-1 hormone receptors to increase its effects.



Brand names include Wegovy and Ozempic (injectable Semaglutide) and Zepbound and Mounjaro (injectable Tirzepatide). Other GLP-1 medications exist, but these are the most effective and popular for weight management.

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Nutritional Considerations

Balanced nutrition, an important part of your journey with injectable Semaglutide or Tirzepatide can help reduce hunger, control blood sugar, prevent nutrient deficiencies, and manage side effects.

Protein: Protein helps your body build and repair muscles, keeps you feeling full, and supports your energy needs. Aim for 1.2-2 g protein/kg body weight (0.5-0.9 g protein per lb body weight) per day.



Fiber: Fiber enhances the feeling of fullness, helps with digestive regularity, and prevents constipation, a common side effect of injectable Semaglutide and Tirzepatide. The guidelines for fiber are 25g per day for women and 38g per day for men.



Micronutrients: Injectable Semaglutide and Tirzepatide slow down how quickly food leaves your stomach, so food stays in the stomach longer before moving into the intestines. This can affect how the body absorbs certain essential micronutrients like calcium, iron, and vitamin D**.** Incorporate foods rich in these micronutrients into your meals and snacks.



Water: Water supports digestion, aids in nutrient absorption, and helps you maintain energy. Aim for 8 glasses (64 fl oz) of water per day.



Semaglutide and Tirzepatide injectable medications often reduce appetite, leading to lower food intake. This can cause malnutrition, which happens when your body doesn't get enough nutrients like protein, vitamins, and minerals. If your appetite is low, it's even more important to prioritize whole foods to ensure you're getting enough protein, fiber, and micronutrients.

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Preventing Muscle Loss

Those taking injectable Semaglutide or Tirzepatide are at risk for losing muscle mass.

These medications reduce hunger and increase fullness, leading to lower food intake. When you consume fewer calories, the body may break down muscle tissue for energy, particularly during rapid weight loss. With a reduced appetite, you also might not be eating enough protein, which is essential for preserving muscle mass.

Key Strategies to Protect Muscle Mass:

- Ensure you eat enough protein (1.2-2 g/kg) to support muscle repair and growth.
- Incorporate resistance exercises to keep muscles active and prevent muscle breakdown.



Managing Side Effects

By slowing the movement of food from the stomach to the intestines, Semaglutide and Tirzepatide injectable medications can lead to side effects such as nausea and constipation. These medications may also cause rapid emptying of the intestines in some individuals, which can lead to diarrhea.

Fortunately, there are nutritional strategies to manage these side effects.

Nausea:

- Small, frequent meals: Eat smaller portions more often to reduce nausea.
- Ginger tea: Ginger has been shown to help settle the stomach.
- Cold foods: Cold meals are often easier to tolerate than hot foods.



Constipation:

- Hydrate: Drink 8-10 glasses of water daily.
- Increase fiber slowly: Include more whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.



Diarrhea:

- Stay hydrated: Drink fluids with electrolytes to replace lost minerals.
- Eat bland foods: Stick to easily digestible options like bananas and rice.



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Long-Term Habits

Building sustainable habits can help you achieve long-term success with injectable Semaglutide or Tirzepatide.

- **Meal Prep:** Having meals ready makes it easier to stay on track with healthy eating habits.
- **Consistent Meal Times:** Helps regulate blood sugar levels, improves digestion and appetite control.
- **Building a Balanced Plate:** Balanced meals can prevent weight regain and ensure you are getting enough of the nutrients you need.
- **Mindful Eating:** Pay full attention to the experience of eating, noticing flavors, textures, and how your body feels as you eat.



Ongoing Monitoring & Support

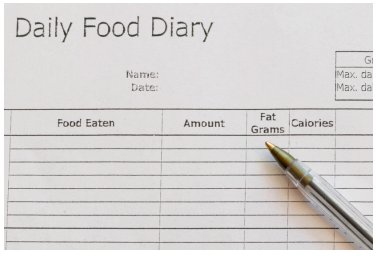
Monitoring your progress and getting support from your healthcare provider can help you see how you're progressing towards your goals.

Tools and strategies include:

- Food tracking apps
- Wearable fitness trackers
- Body composition scales
- Protein and calorie tracking
- Journals and logs
- DEXA scans
- Regular blood tests







Use a combination of tools to track your progress effectively and ensure you're getting the nutrients you need and seeing the body changes you expect.

***Disclaimer**: The content provided in this handout only applies to FDA-approved injectable Semaglutide and Tirzepatide medications (Wegovy, Ozempic, Zepbound, and Mounjaro). It does not apply to other weight loss medications or compounded versions of Semaglutide or Tirzepatide. Consult with your physician for medication management.*