



Understanding Semaglutide: A Guide for Patients

What Is Semaglutide?

Semaglutide is a prescription medication that can help with weight loss and, in some cases, manage type 2 diabetes. You might know it by brand names like Ozempic (often used for diabetes) or Wegovy (approved specifically for weight loss). It's given as a once-weekly injection that you or your healthcare provider can administer, usually in the thigh, abdomen, or upper arm. Semaglutide belongs to a class of drugs called GLP-1 receptor agonists, which mimic a natural hormone in your body to help regulate appetite, digestion, and blood sugar.

How Does It Work?

Semaglutide works by copying the effects of a hormone called glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1), which your body naturally releases after eating. This hormone does a few key things:

Reduces Appetite: It signals your brain to feel full, so you're less hungry and eat smaller portions.

Slows Digestion: It slows down how quickly food leaves your stomach, helping you feel satisfied longer and reducing cravings.

Improves Blood Sugar Control: It helps your body release insulin (a hormone that lowers blood sugar) when you eat, which is especially helpful for people with type 2 diabetes.

By working on these systems, semaglutide helps you eat less without feeling deprived, making it easier to lose weight and, if needed, manage blood sugar levels.

Benefits of Semaglutide

Semaglutide offers several benefits, especially if you're struggling with weight or diabetes:

Weight Loss: For people using it for weight management (like with Wegovy), semaglutide can lead to significant results. Studies show it helps most people lose 15-20% of their body weight over about a year—sometimes more with lifestyle changes. For example, if you weigh 200 pounds, that could mean losing 30-40 pounds.

Better Blood Sugar Control: If you have type 2 diabetes, it can lower your blood sugar and reduce your need for other diabetes medications.

Heart Health: Research suggests it may lower the risk of heart attacks or strokes in people with diabetes or obesity, thanks to its effects on weight and blood sugar.

Improved Quality of Life: Many patients report feeling more energetic, confident, and in control of their eating habits while on semaglutide.

Average Weight Loss

The amount of weight you lose on semaglutide depends on factors like your starting weight, diet, exercise, and how long you use the medication. In clinical trials for Wegovy (the weight-loss version), patients typically lost:

5-10% of body weight in the first 3-6 months (10-20 pounds for a 200-pound person).

15-20% of body weight after about 68 weeks (30-40 pounds for a 200-pound person).

Adding healthy habits—like eating more protein and veggies or walking regularly—can boost these results. Keep in mind that weight loss tends to slow over time, and maintaining it often requires staying on the medication, as stopping can lead to weight regain.

Side Effects to Expect

Like any medication, semaglutide can cause side effects, especially when you first start or increase your dose. Most are mild and improve over time, but here's what to watch for:

Common Side Effects: Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, or stomach pain. These often happen because the drug slows digestion, but they usually fade after a few weeks. Eating smaller, blander meals can help.

Less Common: Fatigue, headache, or a feeling of fullness. Some people also notice hair thinning, though this is often tied to rapid weight loss rather than the drug itself.

Rare but Serious: There's a small risk of gallbladder issues (like gallstones), pancreatitis (severe pancreas inflammation), or low blood sugar (especially if you're on other diabetes meds). Semaglutide also carries a warning about a rare type of thyroid cancer (seen in animal studies), so it's not recommended if you have a personal or family history of certain thyroid cancers.

When to Seek Medical Attention

While most side effects are manageable, some symptoms need prompt attention. Contact your doctor right away if you experience:

Severe stomach pain that doesn't go away, especially if it spreads to your back or comes with vomiting—this could signal pancreatitis.

Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash, swelling, or trouble breathing.

Yellowing of your skin or eyes (jaundice), which might indicate gallbladder or liver problems.

Unusual changes in mood or vision, as these can rarely occur with GLP-1 medications.

Persistent vomiting or dehydration that prevents you from eating or drinking normally.

Also, let us know if side effects like nausea don't improve after a few weeks, or if you're losing weight too quickly (more than 2 pounds per week for several weeks), as this might require a dose adjustment.

Final Thoughts

Semaglutide is a powerful tool for weight loss and better health, and it works best when paired with a balanced diet and regular activity. It's not a quick fix—think of it as a helper to build sustainable habits. Be patient with your body as it adjusts, and keep open communication with your VAMONTA provider to ensure the medication is working safely and effectively for you.