

# I Am Taking a GLP-1 Weight-Loss Medication—What Should I Know?

## What Are These Medications?

Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists (semaglutide [Wegovy, Ozempic, Rybelsus]) and dual incretin agonists (tirzepatide [Zepbound, Mounjaro]) are medications that reduce food cravings, increase fullness, slow digestion, and can help control blood glucose. They are popular treatments for obesity.

## What Should I Eat While Taking GLP-1 Medications?

For most benefit and fewer side effects, follow our MEAL plan:

**Muscle maintenance:** GLP-1 medications can cause loss of muscle and fat. Begin each meal with 20 to 30 g of protein from foods like fish, beans, chickpeas, or tofu. Aim for 1.0 to 1.5 g of protein per kg of body weight daily, if moderately active. If your appetite is very low, use protein shakes with at least 20 g protein per serving.

**Energy balance:** Because these medications reduce appetite, keep your energy by eating smaller meals plus snacks (fruit, handful of nuts, unsweetened yogurt). Choose slowly digested carbohydrates like sweet potatoes or oatmeal instead of refined grains (white bread, pastries) or sugary drinks that can cause blood glucose swings. To feel full longer, add healthy fats like olive oil or avocado to meals.

**Avoid side effects:** GLP-1 medications can cause digestive side effects. For nausea, avoid high-fat foods (fried items, processed meats) and eat whole-grain toast or cereal. Ginger tea or fruit can also help. For heartburn, eat smaller portions and avoid lying down for 2 to 3 hours after meals. Choose baking or steaming over deep frying. Avoid irritating spices (black pepper, chili, garlic). For constipation, increase both soluble fiber (oats, apples) and insoluble fiber (vegetable skins, nuts) with plenty of water. Consider over-the-counter stool softeners or laxatives.

**Liquid intake:** GLP-1 medications can cause dehydration. Drink 2 to 3 liters (8-12 cups) of fluid daily, mainly water. Include water-rich vegetables and fruits (cucumbers, watermelon) and soups. Minimize alcohol, caffeine, and sweetened beverages.

## Which Diets Should I Avoid While Taking GLP-1 Medications?

Extreme calorie restriction can worsen dehydration, fatigue, and kidney problems, and limit essential nutrients. Combining these restrictive diets with GLP-1 medications can also result in excessive weight loss. Strict vegan diets can lack vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, iron, and protein.

## Do I Need Vitamins or Other Supplements?

A well-balanced, nutrient-dense diet is usually better than supplements. Consult your doctor about vitamin D, calcium, or a multivitamin if at risk (eg, low dairy, minimal sun, highly restrictive diet, malabsorption).

## Diet and exercise guidance for patients taking GLP-1s

Follow our **MEAL** plan to maximize benefits while taking GLP-1s for weight loss.

### Maintain muscle

- 20-30 g Protein (fish, poultry, yogurt, beans) per meal
- Protein shakes when GLP-1s severely reduce appetite

### Energize and balance

- Snacks (nuts, fruits, yogurt) between meals
- Slow-digesting foods (oatmeal, sweet potatoes); healthy fats (olive oil, avocado)

### Avoid GLP-1 side effects

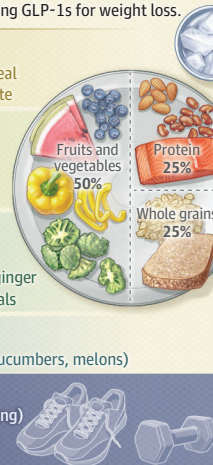
- Constipation: increase fiber and stay hydrated
- Nausea: avoid fried foods; eat whole grains and try ginger
- Heartburn: avoid spicy foods; stay upright after meals

### Liquid for hydration needs

- 8-12 Cups water per day; hydrating foods (soups, cucumbers, melons)

### Physical activity while taking GLP-1s

- Aerobic exercise: 150 minutes per week (brisk walking)
- Strength training: 30 minutes, 2-3 times per week (weights, resistance bands)



## What About Exercise?

To retain muscle and overall health, follow a 3-step approach to exercise. First, gradually increase moderate activity like brisk walking, starting with 10 minutes daily and building to 150 minutes weekly. Second, add strength training 2 to 3 times weekly for 30 minutes using bands, weights, or body weight exercises (squats, lunges). Third, maintain progress with 30 to 60 minutes of daily activity while continuing the 2 to 3 weekly 30-minute strength-training sessions.

## How Can I Avoid Regaining Weight if I Stop Medication?

Weight regain varies but is less common with ongoing lifestyle changes. To maintain weight loss, continue physical activity (aim for 60 minutes daily) and resistance training (2-3 times weekly). Maintain healthy eating habits, especially adequate protein intake.

## How Should I Track My Progress?

Track what you eat using a smartphone application, paper diary, or photos. Share this information with your health care team.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases  
<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/prescription-medications-treat-overweight-obesity>

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