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2. Liraglutide

Liraglutide

Pronunciation: *LIR-a-GLOO-tide*

Generic name: liraglutide

Brand names: [Saxenda](#), [Victoza](#)

Dosage form: Saxenda (Pre-filled pen that delivers doses of 0.6 mg, 1.2 mg, 1.8 mg, 2.4 mg or 3 mg), Victoza/ liraglutide injection (Pre-filled pen that delivers doses of 0.6 mg, 1.2 mg, or 1.8 mg)

Drug class: [GLP-1 Agonists \(Incretin Mimetics\)](#)

Medically reviewed by [Carmen Pope, BPharm](#). Last updated on Mar 25, 2025.

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What is liraglutide?

Liraglutide is used to improve blood sugar control in adults and children 10 years and older with type 2 diabetes (alongside dietary changes); to reduce cardiovascular risk in adults with type 2 diabetes; or for weight loss in adults and children 12 and older.

- Liraglutide comes in 3 FDA-approved forms: [Saxenda](#), [Victoza](#), and generic liraglutide injection.
- Victoza and generic liraglutide are used to lower blood sugar (glucose) in type 2 diabetes.
- Only [Saxenda](#) is specifically approved for weight loss, although Victoza/ liraglutide injection may cause weight loss as a side effect (see [Can liraglutide be used for weight loss?](#)).

Liraglutide's **mechanism of action** involves mimicking a natural hormone called GLP-1, that your body makes after eating. GLP-1 helps control blood sugar in type 2 diabetes by increasing insulin when needed, reducing glucose production in the liver, slowing digestion, and decreasing appetite. When used in people with excess weight, liraglutide reduces appetite by slowing down digestion which tells your brain you are full, so you eat less. Over time, eating less leads to weight loss.

- Unlike your body's natural GLP-1 which works for minutes, liraglutide lasts for 24 hours, which means liraglutide injections only need to be given 1 time a day.

Liraglutide belongs to the **drug class** called [glucagon-like peptide-1 \(GLP-1\) receptor agonists](#), which includes other medications such as [Ozempic](#), [Wegovy](#), [Rybelsus](#), [Trulicity](#), and [Byetta](#).

Liraglutide first gained **FDA approval** on January 25, 2010, under **Victoza**, for type 2 diabetes, and **Saxenda** for weight loss. A **Victoza generic**, called liraglutide injection, was FDA-approved on December 23, 2024. This generic is only FDA-approved to improve blood sugar control in people with Type 2 diabetes.

Liraglutide uses

Liraglutide comes in 3 FDA-approved forms:

- **Saxenda**: Approved for weight loss treatment only
- **Victoza**: Approved for diabetes treatment only (improve blood sugar control/reduce cardiovascular risk)
- Liraglutide injection: Approved for diabetes treatment only (improve blood sugar control).

FDA-approved Saxenda uses

Saxenda is used for adults who are obese or overweight with weight-related medical problems, and children with obesity aged 12 to 17 years with a body weight above 132 pounds (60 kg) to help them lose weight and keep the weight off.

- Saxenda should be used with a reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity.
- Saxenda and Victoza have the same active ingredient, liraglutide, and should not be used together or with other GLP-1 receptor agonist medicines.
- It is not known if Saxenda is safe and effective when taken with other prescription, over-the counter medicines, or herbal weight loss products.
- It is not known if Saxenda is safe and effective in children under 12 years of age.

FDA-approved Victoza/ generic liraglutide injection uses

Victoza/ liraglutide injection is used to lower blood sugar (glucose) in type 2 diabetes in adults and children who are 10 years of age and older along with diet and exercise.

Victoza is also approved to reduce the risk of major cardiovascular events such as heart attack, stroke or death in adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus with known heart disease.

Victoza/ liraglutide injection is not for use in people with type 1 diabetes.

They should not be used with other medicines that contain liraglutide.

It is not known if Victoza/ liraglutide injection is safe and effective in lowering blood sugar (glucose) in children under 10 years of age

Liraglutide side effects

The **most common side effects** of liraglutide (Victoza/ liraglutide injection) when used in people with **type 2 diabetes** are:

- nausea
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- decreased appetite
- indigestion and constipation.

The **most common side effects** of liraglutide (Saxenda) when used for **weight loss** are:

- nausea

- injection site reaction
- tiredness (fatigue)
- diarrhea
- low blood sugar (hypoglycemia)
- dizziness
- constipation
- headache
- stomach pain
- vomiting
- upset stomach (dyspepsia)
- changes in enzyme (lipase) levels in your blood.

Additional common side effects of liraglutide used for weight loss in children (Saxenda) include fever and gastroenteritis.

Serious side effects and warnings

Liraglutide carries a **Boxed Warning** for thyroid C-cell tumors in rats and mice, but it is unknown whether liraglutide would cause this type of cancer in humans.

Possible thyroid tumors, including cancer. liraglutide and medicines that work like liraglutide caused thyroid tumors, including thyroid cancer. It is not known if liraglutide will cause thyroid tumors, or a type of thyroid cancer called medullary thyroid carcinoma (MTC) in people.

- Do not use liraglutide if you or any of your family have ever had a type of thyroid cancer called medullary thyroid carcinoma (MTC), or if you have an endocrine system condition called Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia syndrome type 2 (MEN 2).
- Call your doctor at once if you have **signs of a thyroid tumor**, such as swelling or a lump in your neck, trouble swallowing, a hoarse voice, or shortness of breath. These may be symptoms of thyroid cancer.

Inflammation of your pancreas (pancreatitis). Stop using liraglutide and call your healthcare provider right away if you have severe pain in your stomach area (abdomen) that will not go away, with or without vomiting. You may feel the pain from your abdomen to your back.

Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia). Your risk of getting low blood sugar may be higher if you use liraglutide with another medicine that can cause low blood sugar, such as a sulfonylurea or insulin. Signs and symptoms of low blood sugar may include:

- dizziness or light-headedness
- sweating
- confusion or drowsiness
- headache
- blurred vision
- slurred speech

- shakiness
- fast heartbeat
- anxiety, irritability, or mood changes
- hunger
- weakness
- feeling jittery.

Serious allergic reactions. Stop using liraglutide and get medical help right away if you have any symptoms of a serious allergic reaction including:

- swelling of your face, lips, tongue or throat
- problems breathing or swallowing
- severe rash or itching
- fainting or feeling dizzy
- very rapid heartbeat.

Kidney problems (kidney failure). In people who have kidney problems, diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting may cause a loss of fluids (dehydration) which may cause kidney problems to get worse.

Gallbladder problems. Gallbladder problems including gall stones have happened in some people who take liraglutide. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get symptoms of gallbladder problems, which may include:

- pain in your upper stomach (abdomen)
- fever
- yellowing of skin or eyes (jaundice)
- clay-colored stools.

Food or liquid getting into the lungs during surgery or other procedures that use anesthesia or deep sleepiness (deep sedation). liraglutide may increase the chance of food getting into your lungs during surgery or other procedures. Tell all your healthcare providers that you are taking liraglutide before you are scheduled to have surgery or other procedures.

Pancreatitis associated with liraglutide has been reported in post-marketing reports. Stop taking liraglutide and talk to your healthcare provider immediately if you experience symptoms such as pain in your upper abdomen that spreads to your back, a swollen or tender abdomen, fever, or nausea and vomiting.

Depression or thoughts of suicide. You should pay attention to any mental changes, especially sudden changes, in your mood, behaviors, thoughts, or feelings. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any mental changes that are new, worse, or worry you.

Victoza is not for [type 1 diabetes](#).

Do not use Saxenda and Victoza/ liraglutide injection together. Do not use liraglutide with other GLP-1 agonists, such as [Ozempic](#), [Wegovy](#), [Rybelsus](#), [Trulicity](#), or [Byetta](#).

These are not all the possible side effects of liraglutide. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effect that bothers you or does not go away. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to

the FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

 [Liraglutide side effects](#) (more detail)

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Before taking

You should not use liraglutide if you are allergic to liraglutide, Saxenda, Victoza, or any of the inactive ingredients in liraglutide. In addition, do not use if you have:

- multiple endocrine neoplasia type 2 (tumors in your glands)
- a personal or family history of medullary thyroid carcinoma (a type of thyroid cancer).

Tell your healthcare provider about all your medical conditions before starting liraglutide, including if you:

- are taking certain medicines called GLP-1 receptor agonists such as Ozempic, Wegovy, Ryebelsus, Trulicity, or Byetta
- have or have had problems with your pancreas, kidneys or liver
- have severe problems with your stomach, such as slowed emptying of your stomach (gastroparesis), problems with digesting food, or severe stomach problems
- have type 1 diabetes
- are scheduled to have surgery or other procedures that use anesthesia or deep sleepiness (deep sedation)
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed.

Liraglutide is not approved for use by anyone younger than 10 years old with type 2 diabetes (Victoza/ liraglutide injection), or for anyone younger than 12 years for weight loss (Saxenda). For cardiovascular risk reduction, it is only approved for adults 18 years and older with type 2 diabetes (Victoza/ liraglutide injection).

Pregnancy

It is not known if liraglutide will harm an unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while using liraglutide.

Breastfeeding

It is not known if liraglutide passes into your breast milk. You and your healthcare provider should decide if you should breastfeed while taking liraglutide.

i [Liraglutide pregnancy and breastfeeding warnings](#) (more detail)

How should I use liraglutide?

Read the **Instructions for Use** that come with the brand of liraglutide your healthcare provider has prescribed. Use liraglutide exactly as your healthcare provider tells you to. See the:

- [Saxenda Instructions for Use](#)
- [Victoza Instructions for Use](#)
- [Liraglutide injection Instructions for Use](#).

Inject liraglutide **1 time each day**, at any time of the day.

- Liraglutide may be taken with or without food.

Liraglutide is injected **under the skin** (subcutaneously) of your stomach (abdomen), thigh, or upper arm. Do not inject liraglutide into a muscle (intramuscularly) or a vein (intravenously).

- Change (rotate) your injection site with each daily injection. Do not use the same site for each injection.
- Your healthcare provider will teach you how to inject liraglutide yourself, or you can have a caregiver give it to you.

If you are also prescribed insulin, **do not** mix insulin and liraglutide in the same injection.

- You may give an injection of insulin in the same body area as liraglutide (such as your stomach area), but not right next to each other.

i [Liraglutide patient tips](#) (more detail)

Liraglutide dosing information

Usual Adult Liraglutide Dose for Diabetes Type 2 for Glycemic Control (Victoza, generic liraglutide injection) or Cardiovascular Risk Reduction (Victoza only)

Initial dose: liraglutide 0.6 mg subcutaneously 1 time daily for 1 week then increase to 1.2 mg daily.

- If additional glycemic control is needed, increase the dose to 1.8 mg daily after 1 week of treatment with the 1.2 mg daily dose.

Maintenance dose: 1.2 to 1.8 mg subcutaneously 1 time a day.

Maximum dose: 1.8 mg subcutaneously 1 time a day.

Note: The 0.6 mg liraglutide dose is intended to reduce gastrointestinal symptoms and is not an effective dose for glycemic control.

Usual Child 10 years and Older Liraglutide Dose for Diabetes Type 2 for Glycemic Control (Victoza, generic liraglutide injection)

Initial dose: liraglutide 0.6 mg subcutaneously 1 time daily for at least 1 week.

- If additional glycemic control is needed, increase the dose to 1.2 mg daily, and if additional glycemic control is still required, increase to 1.8 mg daily after at least 1 week of treatment with the 1.2 mg daily dose.

Maintenance dose: 0.6 to 1.8 mg subcutaneously 1 time a day.

Maximum dose: 1.8 mg subcutaneously 1 time a day.

Usual Adult and Child 12 and older Liraglutide Dose for Weight Loss (Saxenda)

Saxenda is started at a low dose initially then gradually increased over 5 weeks to the full dose of Saxenda 3 mg.

- Week 1: Saxenda 0.6 mg for 1 week.
- Week 2: Saxenda 1.2 mg for 1 week.
- Week 3: Saxenda 1.8 mg for 1 week.
- Week 4: Saxenda 2.4 mg for 1 week.
- Week 5: Saxenda 3 mg for 1 week.

After this initial dosing schedule, do not change the dose of Saxenda unless your healthcare provider tells you to.

Children 12 and older may reduce their dose to 2.4 mg daily if the maximum dose is not tolerated.

 [Detailed Liraglutide dosage information](#)

What happens if I miss a dose of liraglutide?

If you miss a dose of liraglutide, take the missed dose at the next scheduled dose. Do not take 2 doses of liraglutide at the same time.

What happens if I take too much liraglutide?

If you take too much liraglutide, call your healthcare provider right away. Taking too much liraglutide may cause severe nausea, severe vomiting, and low blood sugar (hypoglycemia).

What happens if I develop low blood sugar on liraglutide?

You may have low blood sugar (**hypoglycemia**) and feel very hungry, dizzy, irritable, confused, anxious, or shaky. To quickly treat hypoglycemia, eat or drink a fast-acting source of sugar (fruit juice, hard candy, crackers, raisins, or non-diet soda).

Your doctor may prescribe a glucagon injection kit in case you have severe hypoglycemia. Be sure your family or close friends know how to give you this injection in an emergency.

Blood sugar levels can be affected by other medications (such as insulin or sulfonylureas for diabetes), [stress](#), illness, surgery, exercise, alcohol use, or skipping meals. **Ask your doctor before changing your dose or medication schedule.**

Also, watch for signs of high blood sugar (**hyperglycemia**) such as increased thirst or urination.

What should I avoid while using liraglutide?

Never share an injection pen or prefilled syringe with another person, even if the needle has been changed. Sharing these devices can allow infections or diseases to pass from one person to another.

What other drugs will affect liraglutide?

Other drugs may interact with liraglutide, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, [vitamins](#), and [herbal products](#). Know the medicines you take. Keep a list to show your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine. Tell your doctor about all your current medicines and any you start or stop using, especially:

- insulin
- **oral diabetes medicine** - Glucotrol, Metaglip, Amaryl, Avandaryl, Duetact, DiaBeta, Micronase, Glucovance, and others.

Liraglutide can slow your digestion, and it may take longer for your body to absorb any medicines you take by mouth.

This is not a full list of drug interactions. See the [Liraglutide Prescribing Information](#) for a full list.

 [Liraglutide drug interactions](#) (more detail)

Does liraglutide interact with my other drugs?

Enter medications to view a detailed interaction report using our [Drug Interaction Checker](#).

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How do I store liraglutide?

Store unopened liraglutide in a refrigerator between 36-46°F (2-8°C), away from the cooling element and do not freeze.

After opening, you can store the pen for 30 days either at room temperature (59-86°F/15-30°C) or in the fridge. Always keep the cap on and protect it from heat and sunlight.

For injections, use a fresh needle each time, removing and discarding it after use. Store the pen without an injection needle attached to prevent contamination, leakage, or infection.

Liraglutide ingredients

Victoza brand

Active ingredient: liraglutide.

Inactive ingredients: disodium phosphate dihydrate, propylene glycol, phenol and water for injection, hydrochloric acid or sodium hydroxide may be added to adjust pH.

Victoza injection is available as a 6 mg/mL solution in a pre-filled, single-patient-use pen that delivers doses of 0.6 mg, 1.2 mg, or 1.8 mg.

Saxenda brand

Active ingredient: liraglutide.

Inactive ingredients: disodium phosphate dihydrate, propylene glycol, phenol and water for injection. Hydrochloric acid or sodium hydroxide may be added to adjust the pH.

Saxenda injection is available as a 6 mg/mL solution in a 3 mL pre-filled, single, patient-use pen that delivers doses of 0.6 mg, 1.2 mg, 1.8 mg, 2.4 mg or 3 mg.

Generic liraglutide injection (Hikma Pharmaceuticals PLC)

Active ingredient: liraglutide.

Inactive ingredients: disodium phosphate dihydrate, propylene glycol, phenol and water for injection.

Generic liraglutide injection is available as a 6 mg/mL solution in a pre-filled, single-patient-use pen that delivers doses of 0.6 mg, 1.2 mg, or 1.8 mg.

Who makes liraglutide?

Novo Nordisk makes liraglutide under the brand name Victoza.

Novo Nordisk makes liraglutide under the brand name Saxenda.

Hikma Pharmaceuticals PLC makes generic liraglutide injection.

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- [Will Victoza help with weight loss?](#)
- [How many doses are in a Victoza pen?](#)

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References

1. [Liraglutide Injection Prescribing Information](#)
2. [Hikma receives FDA approval and launches the generic version of Victoza®, Liraglutide, in the US.](#)
3. [Saxenda Prescribing Information](#)
4. [Victoza Prescribing Information](#)

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Further information

Always consult your healthcare provider to ensure the information displayed on this page applies to your personal circumstances.

[Medical Disclaimer](#)

Guide to Weight Loss Drugs

Find out everything you need to know about weight loss drugs in our prescription [weight loss drug guide](#).

DRUG STATUS

Availability		
Rx	Prescription only	
Pregnancy & Lactation		
	Risk data available	
CSA Schedule*		
N/A	Not a controlled drug	▼
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