

## Cultivating Health



JULY 19, 2023

# Ozempic for weight loss: Does it work, and what do experts recommend?



About 42% of American adults are obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For years, people have been trying all sorts of methods and medications in search of the perfect weight loss solution.

A new trend has been getting a lot of attention: people using the diabetes drug Ozempic for weight loss.

But what does the research say about this use of the drug? Do health experts recommend Ozempic for weight loss purposes? Our experts answer these questions and more.

## What is Ozempic?

Ozempic, known generically as [semaglutide](https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a618008.html) <<https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a618008.html>>, was **approved in 2017 by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** <[https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda\\_docs/label/2017/209637lbl.pdf](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/label/2017/209637lbl.pdf)> for use in adults with **type 2 diabetes** <[blog/cultivating-health/healthy-lifestyle-habits-to-help-you-prevent-or-manage-your-type-2-diabetes/2022/11](https://health.ucdavis.edu/blog/cultivating-health/healthy-lifestyle-habits-to-help-you-prevent-or-manage-your-type-2-diabetes/2022/11)>.

Ozempic is a weekly injection that helps lower blood sugar by helping the pancreas make more insulin. It is not approved for weight loss, but some physicians prescribe it to be used for weight loss.

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## How does Ozempic work?

Ozempic works by mimicking a naturally occurring hormone. As those hormone levels rise, the molecules go to your brain, telling it you're full. It also slows digestion by increasing the time it takes for food to leave the body. This is similar to the effect of [bariatric surgery](#) <[treatments/bariatric-surgery](#)>.

When using Ozempic to treat [diabetes](#) <[conditions/endocrinology-diabetes/diabetes](#)>, weight loss is a common side effect. It is designed to be taken long-term.

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## Does Ozempic work for weight loss purposes?

The active ingredient in Ozempic, semaglutide, does work for weight loss, according to research. It's important that people continue to make lifestyle changes to help their weight loss, such as eating right and exercising.

Ozempic is not approved for weight loss. However, semaglutide is [approved for weight loss](#) </blog/cultivating-health/can-weight-loss-medications-help-you-lose-weight/2024/08> under the name [Wegovy](#) </blog/cultivating-health/are-weight-loss-medications-like-wegovy-right-for-you/2023/09>. Ozempic has a smaller dose of semaglutide than Wegovy.

It's important to note that if you start taking either of these drugs for weight loss, your body may get used to it, establishing a new normal. This can cause your weight to plateau. Research has shown that if you stop taking Ozempic (or Wegovy), it's likely that you will gain back the weight you lost.

[Find out if weight loss medications can actually help you lose weight >](#)

[Learn about weight loss medications, like Wegovy, and whether they're right for you >](#)

## What's the difference between Ozempic and Wegovy?

Wegovy is a once-weekly [injection approved by the FDA in 2021](#) <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-new-drug-treatment-chronic-weight-management-first-2014> for chronic weight management. It's the first drug approved for this purpose since 2014.

Ozempic and Wegovy are made by the same company. They both contain the same active ingredient semaglutide. However, Wegovy contains higher doses of it and is designed for weight loss. Ozempic has lower doses of semaglutide and was developed specifically for [type 2 diabetes](#) </conditions/endocrinology-diabetes/diabetes/type-2-diabetes> patients.

One other difference is that Ozempic is typically covered by health insurance, while Wegovy is often not covered.

[Learn about diabetes and related conditions >](#)

## Are there benefits to taking Ozempic for weight loss?

Ozempic can help people lose weight, which can reduce the risk for many other serious health conditions, such as heart problems. Semaglutide treatments can also be used as an alternative to [bariatric surgery](#) for some patients who are obese. The degree of weight loss achieved with surgery is usually much greater and lasts longer than with [medications](#).

Experts still recommend that people avoid using Ozempic unless they have [type 2 diabetes](#). Instead, talk to your health care provider about starting Wegovy for weight loss.

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## Is there an off-brand version of Ozempic?

[The FDA warns people of the dangers of using "generic" Ozempic and Wegovy.](#) <<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/postmarket-drug-safety-information-patients-and-providers/medications-containing-semaglutide-marketed-type-2-diabetes-or-weight-loss>> It says there are no approved generic versions of these drug.

However, an off-brand version of the drug has been seen at [compounding pharmacies](#) <<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/human-drug-compounding/compounding-and-fda-questions-and-answers>> across the U.S. The FDA received reports of adverse events after patients used "generic" versions of semaglutide, the active ingredient in Ozempic and Wegovy.

There are reports of a [drug shortage](#) <<https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/drugshortages/default.cfm>> involving Ozempic and Wegovy, as of July 2023. When people use Ozempic off-label for weight loss, type 2 diabetes patients who rely on Ozempic may struggle to find this medication.

[Learn about other weight loss medications that are available](#) >

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