

# GLP-1: The Wonder Drug

Explore the groundbreaking impact of GLP-1 medications on health, weight-loss, and the food industry, alongside their benefits and challenges. By Henk Hoogenkamp





The initial FDA approval of semaglutide GLP-1 medicine dates to 2005. Fast forward, in 2025 it is estimated that about one in eight US adults are using or have been using these prescription medications.

In short, GLP-1 agonists work by mimicking the effects of hormones of the same name which are made in the small intestine of the human body.

Basically, the “performance” of GLP-1 works on triggering the insulin release of the pancreas and block the glucagon hormone that raises blood sugar from entering the bloodstream, slowing down hunger and satiety signals.

### Subcutaneous Needle

GLP-1 medications are administered through subcutaneous injections. For example, the beginning dosing of Ozempic is 0.25 mg once a week for the first four weeks and -if needed- increasing to the maximum recommended shots of 2 mg weekly.

Although these prescription medications seem to magically reduce body weight and alleviate type 2 diabetes symptoms, it is crucial to emphasise that lifestyle and proactive dietary changes remain the backbone of their success.

A balanced diet and lifestyle—including exercise and optimal sleep—are essential to achieving improved health. People using GLP-1 prescriptions should maintain proper nutrition and hydration throughout the day.

### The GLP-1 Gut Link

Gut health is the foremost physiological benefit of dietary fibre. Fibre promotes the production of short-chain fatty acids, lowers gut pH, and strengthens gut barrier function by serving as a source for gut cells.

Beyond improving digestion, dietary fibre is linked to satiety and interacts functionally with hormones like GLP-1 agonists—a class of medications used to treat type 2 diabetes and obesity, typically administered via subcutaneous injection shots.

GLP-1 and peptide tyrosine function similarly to weight-loss medications such as Eli Lilly’s Zepbound and Novo Nordisk’s Wegovy and Ozempic, which are popular in the US and EU for curbing appetite and inducing rapid weight loss. While GLP-1 medications have broad benefits, they also carry risks.

### Obesity Medication: Is the Long Wait Over?

Until a true wonder drug emerges to effortlessly melt away excess weight, individuals have no choice but to proactively address their expanding waistlines. The key to weight loss is simple: eat less. While low-carb or low-fat diets may work for some and fail for others, people should not ask, “What is the best diet?” but rather, “What is the best diet for whom?”

In modern society, the idea of eating less and exercising more oversimplifies reality. Whether adopting a low-fat or low-carb approach, the fundamental strategy should be similar: reduce sugar, refined flour, and excessive fat while prioritising minimally processed, whole food options. Medications or gastric band surgery should always be a last resort for weight management.

When combined with a reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity, medications like Novo Nordisk’s Wegovy and Ozempic (semaglutide injections) can potentially reduce appetite and enhance feelings of fullness.

Currently, the popularity of these blockbuster obesity medications continues to soar among those seeking an easier route to weight loss. A welcome bonus is that Wegovy has been proven to reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes by 20 percent.

The race for dominance in the weight-loss market is far from over. Novo Nordisk has another promising drug in development, branded as CagriSema, which is expected to receive approval for market introduction in 2026.

### Positive Body Awareness

For example, Eli Lilly’s Zepbound is an injectable prescription medication for individuals suffering from obesity or chronic overweight issues





(BMI >30). Reports indicate that patients treated with Zepbound can achieve double-digit percentage weight loss compared to single-digit percentages with diet and exercise alone over nine months.

However, after discontinuing the medication, initial weight loss may partially reverse, along with other health markers like blood pressure, cholesterol, and metabolic diseases showing a tendency to return to pre-medication levels.

It is still too early to determine how obese individuals respond to smaller dietary food portions and more intensive lifestyle regimens paired with the “new wonder medicine.”

Those who combine the medication with exercise are likely to succeed in keeping weight off more permanently. A positive situational awareness carrying much less weight will always be a welcome booster of the body image.

It is worth noting that some weight-loss pharmaceuticals are associated with risks such as stomach paralysis and other gastrointestinal issues.

Stomach paralysis—gastroparesis—disrupts the movement of food from the stomach into the small intestine, hindering digestion and causing side effects like nausea, vomiting, bloating, gas, reflux, and fullness.

In rare cases, individuals may be at risk for pancreatitis, an inflammation of the pancreas often caused by gallstones, alcohol, or high triglycerides.

Additionally, some users experience excessive fat loss in the face, which may create an aged appearance. New is the medical buzzword “Ozempic Face”:

- Sunken eyes
- Increased wrinkles around the eyes
- Sagging jawline skin
- Hollowed cheekbones
- Dark circles under the eyes

### The GLP-1 Rocket

Tricking the body into feeling full is no longer a challenge now that the satiety hormone known as glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) is within reach for millions of obese individuals.

GLP-1, produced in the small intestine, stimulates insulin production, lowers blood sugar levels, slows stomach emptying, and reduces the levels of hunger hormones.

The food and beverage industry faces both challenges and opportunities as GLP-1 medications reshape consumer purchasing habits, driven by their appetite-suppressing effects.

### Food and Medicine Integration

The integration of food and medicine is gaining momentum with the commercial availability of semaglutides, such as GLP-1 medications.

These special-formulated food products promote natural GLP-1 responses to a meal or “pre-meal hunger support” products such as Nestle’s Boost brand nutritional drinks, not only provide functional health benefits but also complement traditional macronutrients like premium proteins, dietary fiber, carbohydrates, and fats.

The same is true for the Vital Pursuit Nestle food products, as well as the Protality brand of the Abbott company. Many of these food products feature no added sugar and aim to support consumers experiencing side effects commonly associated with semaglutide use. Since every individual’s weight-loss and wellness journey is unique, personalised nutrition solutions must be tailored to meet these diverse needs and expectations.

Originally developed for individuals with type 2 diabetes, semaglutides like Novo Nordisk’s Ozempic and Wegovy are now being linked to a broader spectrum of health benefits. The renowned magazine *The Economist* has dubbed semaglutide “the everything drug” for its potential in treating

kidney disease, cardiovascular conditions, sleep apnea, and even Alzheimer's.

### Disrupting the Food Industry

The ease of weight-loss enabled by GLP-1 medications, as compared to traditional programs, has taken the food industry by surprise. The Jama Cardiology publication determined that some 137 million Americans may be eligible for GLP-1 semaglutide medication, a market that represents a value of USD 150 billion by 2030.

No doubt that the availability of GLP-1 medication will impact consumer spending on regular food and beverages as these pharmaceutical products affect eating habits such as protein quality, portion size, frequency and taste preferences.

This growing trend is poised to drive significant changes in consumer food preferences and purchasing patterns at supermarkets and restaurants. GLP-1 medications influence eating habits such as portion sizes, meal frequency, and taste preferences.

As a result, restaurants are expected to adapt by adding more healthful, low-calorie, nutrient-rich options to their menus, including dishes that are less spicy, salty, or sweet.

Nutrient-dense foods and protein supplements, including protein-fortified products, are quickly gaining traction in affluent societies among consumers using GLP-1 receptor agonists (anti-obesity medications) to support weight loss and overall wellness.

These users gradually purchase less food due to reduced appetite and food intake. Spending reductions are particularly noticeable in ultra-processed food categories, such as high-sugar or high-fat snack foods. Instead, consumers are shifting their expenditures toward healthier options.

### Changing Spending Patterns

GLP-1 users are also influencing food-away-from-home spending by adjusting meal choices, tuning portion sizes, and modifying consumption patterns—often cutting back on breakfast or reducing dinner portions.

For legacy food brands, fast-food restaurants, and supermarkets, this means catering to GLP-1 consumers with smaller portions, single-serving, portion-controlled packaging, and an emphasis on health and convenience.

Reduced grocery spending by GLP-1 users may hit the high-calorie food category hardest, while produce and lean meat deli sections are likely to see increased demand. GLP-1 users are gravitating toward vegetables, fruits, and protein options while cutting back on sugary, salty, and ultra-processed food and beverage products.

### Conclusion

GLP-1 medications mimic the natural hormone semaglutide, which controls blood sugar levels and suppresses appetite, making them highly effective tools for rapid weight-loss.

However, like all pharmaceutical products, they are not without potential side effects, which include mood irritability, nausea, diarrhea, constipation, and stomach discomfort. These drawbacks highlight that semaglutide treatments are not a universal solution.

Additionally, studies have reported that approximately 80 percent of individuals who discontinue GLP-1 medications regain 80 percent of the weight they lost as they return to previous eating habits.

The hope is that those who stop using these prescriptions will continue healthier eating patterns, but only about 10 percent of consumers demonstrate the discipline required to do so. **APFI**



EDITORIAL  
GOT A QUESTION?

Make an enquiry at:  
[apfoodonline.com/  
contact](mailto:apfoodonline.com/contact)

