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What You Should Know About Ozempic



Ozempic is an injectable prescription medication to help adults with Type 2 diabetes manage their blood sugar. Although it's not approved as a weight-loss drug, people without Type 2 diabetes have begun using Ozempic off-label for this purpose. While some health care providers may be prescribing Ozempic for patients whose goal is to lose weight, the drug's manufacturer does not promote, suggest or encourage off-label use of this medication.

As Ozempic is gaining traction on social media platforms as a way to lose weight, you may have questions about this medication and how it's being used for weight loss. This article provides an overview of the diabetes drug Ozempic, explains how it works for weight loss and outlines its common side effects.

An Overview of Ozempic

Approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Ozempic is a prescription medication for treating Type 2 diabetes in adults. It comes as a prefilled pen injector. Dosage depends on an individual's health history and goals, as well as their overall lifestyle. A doctor will prescribe the drug's dosage and explain injection timing, instructions and expectations.

The weekly injectable medication helps improve blood sugar in adults with Type 2 diabetes by lowering hemoglobin A1C, a measure of blood glucose over time. The FDA approved Ozempic's active ingredient, semaglutide, in 2017. Ozempic also helps adults with Type 2 diabetes and known heart disease lower their risk for cardiovascular events, such as stroke or heart attack.

Not everyone with Type 2 diabetes will be prescribed Ozempic, as many individuals can manage their blood sugar with diet, exercise and insulin therapy.

Ozempic for Weight Loss

Although it's not officially considered a weight-loss drug, researchers suggest that people who take Ozempic may lose modest amounts of weight while on the medication. Semaglutide impacts weight in the following ways:

- It affects the hunger centers in the brain, thus reducing or curbing hunger, appetite and cravings.
- It slows the rate of stomach emptying, which prolongs fullness and satiety after eating.

Semaglutide is approved by the FDA at higher doses for treating individuals living with obesity and other weight-related medical problems under the brand name Wegovy. However, Wegovy should only be used as a weight-loss tool under medical supervision and by individuals dealing with "severe" obesity. Although Ozempic and Wegovy have the same active ingredient, they have different brand names and different dosage schedules. Shortages of Wegovy may have forced some people to turn to Ozempic to keep lost weight off.

Side Effects of Ozempic

In general, the side effects of Ozempic are gastrointestinal. The most common side effects include:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Stomach pain
- Constipation

Although rare, more severe complications may include thyroid tumors, pancreatitis, changes in vision, kidney problems and serious allergic reactions. These could lead to major health complications and, in some cases, death. If you're taking Ozempic and experience any worrying symptoms, contact your doctor or seek emergency medical attention.

Summary

Ozempic's weight-loss effects have increasingly been touted by celebrities and on social media platforms. As a result, you may have questions about the medication and wonder if it's right for you and your health goals.

Taking the drug for the goal of losing weight is considered off-label use, so talk with your doctor if you have questions or concerns about Ozempic.

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