

Ask Leyla: Are GLP-1 agonist drugs safe?



Q: Short of bariatric surgery, my doctor has recommended I start taking a semaglutide medication (Ozempic, Wegovy, Rybelsus). Are these safe?

A: Semaglutide is a glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) agonist. It helps control appetite by delaying gastric emptying, resulting in less desire for food. Sounds like a Godsend, right?

I will tell you firsthand that I have many clients who have opted for these medications reporting varying degrees of side effects and a spectrum of outcomes so far.

Let's talk about side effects. The biggest complaint I've heard from most clients is nausea. Some have reported vomiting, reflux, and constipation. So far, these side effects don't appear to recede with time—except for vomiting. I can often tell by the client's facial expression that they have no interest in food due to chronic nausea. Others have reported temporary fatigue and/or malaise after getting the weekly semaglutide injection. For many, especially those individuals with seemingly intractable obesity, the side effects are entirely worth it.

Why? The best description I've heard is "I no longer have food on the brain", or, "I'm not thinking about food anymore where before I was obsessively thinking about what I could eat next." Wow! To no longer be plagued with hunger and cravings is

indeed a Godsend. A tiny minority have reported no side effects whatsoever, but also no positive impact of taking these drugs. They were still hungry.

Let me be clear, as a clinical nutritionist, I'm not a fan of these meds (or any for that matter except where absolutely necessary). But I can't fault anyone for wanting to be free of chronic and uncontrollable hunger.

If you do decide to try a GLP-1 agonist medication, the gift of a lack of appetite that will ensue affords you an opportunity to reshape eating habits. Since you won't be on these meds forever, and I've heard many say they wish they could be, it's an opportunity to take full advantage of this time to establish regular mealtimes and *portions* so you get used to eating this way—establishing new habits.

Later, as you start tapering these medications under the supervision of your doctor, your new *and now familiar habits* will help guide you going forward in how to nourish yourself, eating the right way so as not to bring cravings screaming back into your life. Taking a supplement like **Calocurb** along with other appropriate supplements can help in this transition. A qualified nutritionist can help guide you in your journey.

To your health!

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