

Ozempic (Semaglutide)

What is Ozempic?

Ozempic is a once-weekly injectable medication containing semaglutide that is licensed in Ireland for the treatment of diabetes. It can be prescribed by a doctor 'off-label' for weight loss. The brand name Wegovy, which contains the same ingredient, is indicated for weight loss but is not yet available in Ireland. Ozempic comes in pre-filled 'pens' with a dose of 0.25, 0.5 and 1mg strengths and is self-injected under the skin.

How does it work?

Semaglutide works by mimicking a hormone (GLP1) which is released in the gut in response to eating. This hormone gives you a feeling of being full and is part of the natural regulation of hunger (satiety). It helps prevent over-eating and thus promotes weight loss. Most people will see some results within 8-12 weeks.

How effective is it?

Studies show that about half of people taking Ozempic will lose 15% of their bodyweight after just over a year and about a third will lose 20%. It is important to realise that lifestyle measures are also necessary to get these results but only 2.4% of people who used lifestyle alone got similar results. Healthy eating, exercise and a monitored weight management programme will give best results.

Side effects

All medications can cause side effects and you should read the patient information leaflet that accompanies your medication for a full list. The most common with Ozempic are gastrointestinal such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation, or bloating. Most of these will resolve on

their own within a few weeks. Others include headaches, dizziness, and fatigue. Serious side effects are rare, but you should not take Ozempic if you have a history or risk of, thyroid tumours, pancreatitis, gall bladder disease, or MEN2 syndrome. As a precaution you should not take it if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. You should let us know if you develop any new or severe symptoms.

Ozempic is considered safe to use for most people for weight management.

How long do I take it?

Ozempic only works while you are taking it. Studies show many people will regain some weight if it is stopped but around half may retain their weight loss at a year and most will not regain all their weight. Some people will remain on semaglutide long term.