

Weight-Loss Injections: What You Need to Know

Many people struggle with their weight, even when doing all the right things with diet and exercise. Newer weight-loss injections such as **Mounjaro® (tirzepatide)** and **semaglutide** may help some patients, but they are not suitable for everyone. This blog explains how they work, their benefits and risks, and who may be eligible at **our NHS practice**.

What Are Weight-Loss Injections?

Mounjaro (Tirzepatide)

Mounjaro is an injection given once a week. It works by acting on natural hormones that help control appetite and digestion. This can help you feel full sooner and reduce hunger.

Mounjaro was first used for **type 2 diabetes**, but it has also been approved for **weight management**.

Semaglutide (e.g., Wegovy®, Ozempic®)

Semaglutide is also a once-weekly injection that works on similar hormone pathways. Wegovy is licensed for weight loss; Ozempic is licensed for diabetes but is sometimes discussed in the media for weight loss. Only Wegovy is used for weight management in NHS settings.

Both medications must be used **alongside a reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity**.

Benefits

- **Meaningful weight loss** – Many people lose a significant amount of weight.
- **Health improvements** – Weight reduction can help improve blood pressure, diabetes control, sleep apnoea, cholesterol, and overall heart health.
- **Once-weekly dosing** – This can be more convenient for some people.

These medicines can make a real difference, but they work best when paired with ongoing lifestyle changes.

Risks and Side Effects

Most side effects are mild and improve with time, but some can be more serious.

Common side effects

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea or constipation
- Stomach discomfort
- Reduced appetite (which is expected)

Less common but important risks

- **Pancreatitis** (inflammation of the pancreas)
- **Gallbladder problems**, such as gallstones
- **Low blood sugar**, especially if you take diabetes medication
- **Impact on oral medications** – These injections can slow digestion, which may affect how well the oral contraceptive pill or HRT tablets are absorbed.
- **Surgery considerations** – You may need to stop the injection before certain operations; always inform your hospital team.
- **Pregnancy and breastfeeding** – These medicines are not recommended if you are pregnant, planning pregnancy, or breastfeeding.
- **Risk to vision** – although rare this can be permanent. If you notice any changes to your vision while on treatment, contact us promptly.

Who Is Eligible on the NHS?

Access to these medicines on the NHS is being rolled out gradually and is currently limited to people with the highest medical need.

At our practice for our PCN, the current eligibility criteria are:

- **BMI over 40, and**
- **Weight-related health conditions**, such as:
 - Type 2 diabetes
 - High blood pressure
 - Heart disease
 - Sleep apnoea

- High cholesterol
- Other conditions made worse by weight

Patients also need to be willing to work with a **specialist weight-management service**, which includes dietary, physical activity and behavioural support.

These medicines are not routinely prescribed simply for cosmetic or non-medical weight loss.

How the Process Works

1. **Initial assessment** – We check whether you meet the criteria and rule out any safety concerns.
2. **Referral to a specialist service** – Prescriptions are started in specialist weight-management clinics.
3. **Ongoing monitoring** – Your weight, blood pressure, side effects and overall progress are reviewed regularly.
4. **Treatment review** – If the medicine does not lead to sufficient weight loss over time, it may be stopped.

We're Here to Help

We know that weight management can feel overwhelming, and asking for help is a big step. Our team is here to support you, offer clear advice and guide you through your options safely. Whether you want to explore medication, lifestyle changes or simply talk things through, please reach out — we are here to help you every step of the way.

Dr Maya Chowdhury