RURAL ROTHER
PRIMARY CARE NETWORK

Information Leaflet for GLP-1 injections

1 Why have I been given this leaflet?

This leaflet contains information on a type of medicine called glucagon-like eptide-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1 RAs), also known as GLP-1 mimetics or GLP-1s.

These are available as tablets and injections. This leaflet provides information on GLP-1 injections.

GLP-1 injections are used for:

- type 2 diabetes
- weight management

They are sometimes referred to in the media as “weight loss injections” or “skinny jabs” but only some injections are authorised for weight loss.

4 How do I use GLP-1 injections?

GLP-1 injections should kept in the fridge until they need to be used.

They are usually injected **ONCE a week**, but different brands can have different instructions, so check with your prescribing doctor before use.

They are injected into your body (into the stomach, upper arms or thighs). You should change the area of injection frequently to avoid causing lumps and bumps on the area.

2 What are GLP-1 injections?

GLP-1 injections include medicines like semaglutide, which are better known by their brand names.

GLP-1 medicines	Brand names
Semaglutide	Ozempic, Wegovy
Exenatide	Bydureon
Liraglutide	Saxenda, Victoza
Dulaglutide	Trulicity

Each manufacturer has specific advice on how to handle **missed doses** and gaps in treatment, so you should speak to your prescribing doctor or specialist team if you are unsure.

5 What medicines do they interact with?

GLP-1 injections can affect how your body takes in some medicines, including:

- insulin
- other diabetes medicines (like gliclazide, glimepiride or medicines that end in ‘gliptin’)
- oral contraceptives (the ‘pill’)
- hormone replacement treatment (HRT)
- thyroid medicines (levothyroxine)

These medicines can become less effective or cause a higher risk of side effects.

Always speak to your prescribing doctor or specialist team if you are unsure about starting a new medicine.

3 How do they work?

GLP-1 medicines copy a natural hormone released in the body after eating. Some newer medicines, like tirzepatide (Mounjaro), also act on a second hormone involved in appetite and blood sugar control.

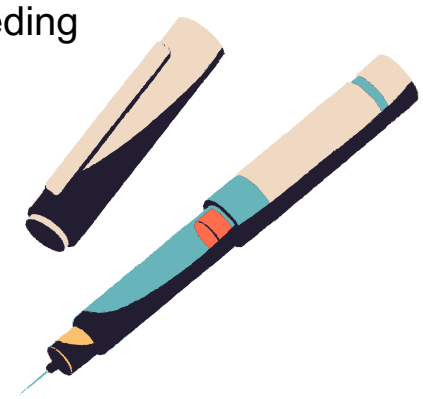
These medicines help your body by:

- making more insulin, which lowers your blood sugar levels
- lowering the amount of sugar (glucose) that your liver makes
- slowing down the digestion of food, so that it takes longer for your body to take in the sugar from meals
- limiting your appetite

6 Are GLP-1 injections safe for me?

You should speak to your prescribing doctor or specialist team if:

- you had ketoacidosis or DKA, a build up of acid (ketones) in the blood stream, in the past
- you had inflamed pancreas (pancreatitis) in the past
- you have problems with your kidneys or liver
- you have problems with your thyroid
- you are pregnant, planning to becoming pregnant or breastfeeding



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7 Are GLP-1 injections safe for my baby?

There is not enough safety data to know whether GLP-1 injections can cause harm to the baby, so you should not breastfeed or get pregnant when you are using GLP-1 injections.

You should use contraceptives during and after using GLP-1 injections to prevent pregnancy. Talk to your specialist team about your contraceptive options, or if you are planning to become pregnant.

8 What are the side effects?

Side effects like **feeling and being sick (vomiting)**, and **diarrhoea** happen to 1 out of 10 people using GLP-1 injections. This is normally mild, but it can sometimes cause **dehydration**, so you should remember your sick day rules and drink plenty of fluids.

People who have diabetes also have a higher risk of having **low blood sugar levels ('hypos')** and **eye problems**, so you should have regular eye checks and discuss your diabetes medicines with your specialist team before starting GLP-1 injections.

Muscle loss is also common, especially for older people, so it is important to do muscle strengthening exercises while you are using GLP-1 injections.

9 What is acute pancreatitis?

Acute pancreatitis is where the pancreas becomes inflamed (swollen) over a short period of time. It is an uncommon but serious side effect of GLP-1 injections.

The main symptom is severe pain in your stomach that travels to your back. Other possible symptoms include:

- feeling or being sick (vomiting)
- indigestion
- high temperature
- yellowing in the whites of the eyes (jaundice)

If you experience any of these symptoms, it is very important to get urgent medical help.

10 Remember the sick day rules!

You should stop using GLP-1 injections **temporarily** if you feel sick with repeated vomiting and diarrhoea, or high temperature above 38'C.

You can use GLP-1 injections after 24 to 48 hours of eating and drinking normally. If you have diabetes, you may need to check your blood sugar and ketone levels more frequently.

Seek medical help if you are unwell for more than 48 hours.

You should let your specialist team know if you need to stop eating for a period of time like before an operation or if you stop eating for religious reasons.

11 Can I throw them away in the bin?

Once you have completed the full doses in the injection pen, you need to remove the needle in the sharps bin, which can be prescribed. Contact your local council as they will usually collect the sharps bin when they are full.

There may be some leftover liquid in the pen, but you should not use them as they may not provide the same effective dose.

Used injection pens should be returned to pharmacy for safe disposal, but some GLP-1 pens can now be recycled. Speak to your pharmacy or surgery for more information.

Summary

- GLP-1 injections should not be bought from unregulated sellers, like beauty salons and via social media, or without speaking to a healthcare professional.
- GLP-1 injections are not a quick fix to lose weight.
- The safety and effectiveness of these medicines when used by people who do not meet the medical requirements has not been studied.
- You should discuss your concerns about GLP-1 injections with your specialist team and prescribing doctor.
- You should report side effects to the Yellow Card scheme.
- If you have diabetes, you should have a personalised plan from your specialist team to manage your diabetes when you are unwell.

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