



## The Skinny on Weight-Loss Medicines

WHEN JIMMY KIMMEL, THE FAMOUS AMERICAN COMEDIAN AND LATE NIGHT TALK SHOW host, stared into an audience of rail-thin celebrities at the 2023 Academy Awards and quipped, “Ya know, looking at you all makes me wonder if Ozempic might be right for me,” I knew we were standing on the edge of a full-fledged medical-cultural phenomenon. The kind of thing that maybe only happens once every hundred years: Germ theory. Vaccines. Cardiac defibrillation. A weight-loss medicine that appears to be safe and actually works, mentioned by name on national TV.

Ozempic is the trade name for Novo Nordisk’s bestselling drug, semaglutide. The drug, as well as those of competitors (like Lily’s tirzepatide, also known as Mounjaro), has been used for a decade or more to treat type 2 diabetes, finding new fame and fortune in the last several years as a treatment for obesity. Now approved for weight loss in most developed countries, including Japan, product is flying off the shelves as more and more patients seek to drop pounds through the miracle of modern pharmaceutical science.

Indeed, the medicine works. Like gangbusters, in fact—studies have shown a 10-15% body weight loss over 5 years of use with a good safety profile thus far. But as the man says, if it’s too good to be true, it probably is; the data also shows us that there continues to be no magic bullet in the world of weight management. Very recent studies show that when patients stop these medicines, weight rebounds, perhaps not to initial levels, but substantially. As such, before starting these medicines, I caution all my patients to not forget about the fundamentals: changes to diet and lifestyle, including healthy eating and plenty of exercise, remain at the crux of healthy and sustainable weight loss. Oftentimes this also involves addressing the psychology behind food craving, as well as related unhealthy behaviors. And the irony is not lost on me that it’s the patients who master this, that feel they don’t need pharmaceuticals to stay fit and healthy.

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