



GLP-1 Receptor Agonists and Weight Management

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Ozempic, Rybelsus, Victoza, Saxenda, Trulicity and Byetta.... by now we've all heard of them, know someone using them or have tried them ourselves. It is a medical trend that is sweeping our country. Let's take a moment to understand why these medications may be helpful to a large percentage of the population. In 2022, 1 in 8 people worldwide were obese and 2.5 billion adults (18+ yrs.) were overweight. Also, in 2022, 37 million children under the age of 5 were overweight and 390 million children and adolescents aged 5-19 years were overweight. Obesity is a chronic complex disease resulting from metabolic inflexibility and can lead to an increased risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease, as well as poor bone health, reproductive issues and certain cancers. So, what does metabolic inflexibility actually mean? It is an inability of our bodies to switch between different fuel sources, such as fat and glucose. In other words, it is an anabolic state that causes us to store fat as opposed to using it as a fuel source. Some factors that contribute to metabolic inflexibility are nutrient overload, highly processed food, autoimmune conditions, insulin resistance and sedentary behavior.

So, where can we start? Definitely, lifestyle modifications are key here. A modified Mediterranean diet is the foundation of these modifications and far more effective than a high carb/low fat diet. Macronutrients would look like 40% carbohydrates (mostly plants), 30% lean protein and 30% healthy fats. Next, an exercise program that includes some resistance work (weights, bands, pilates, yoga) and some cardiovascular work (walk, run, bike, spin, swim, row).

What if we need more help than lifestyle modifications? Then we may be looking at GLP-1 agonists as we listed above. What are some of the benefits of these drugs?

- *Improved fatty liver disease (NAFLD)
- *Decreased glucagon production
- *Increased insulin production
- *Anti-inflammatory benefits
- *Lower blood pressure
- *Improved lipid panel
- *Improved bone mineral density and decreased bone resorption
- *Decreased progression of diabetes-related neuropathy

These drugs do come with some side effects such as severe loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, indigestion and diarrhea. Of course, there are some rare and severe side effects such as pancreatitis, kidney damage, diabetic retinopathy, hypoglycemia and medullary thyroid cancer. We also know that the efficacy of these drugs can plateau at around 12 months. What then?

How can we help our bodies to create our own GLP? As we previously mentioned, a modified Mediterranean diet is the best place to start. Next, adding more prebiotics to our diet in the form of vegetables, fruits, inulin or chicory powder and

fermented foods. Berberine, a plant-based alkaloid, has long been used in Ayurvedic and traditional Chinese medicine. It is widely used to improve glucose metabolism and to balance adiponectin, a hormone secreted by abdominal fat cells. In the functional medicine realm, it is often referred to as the "natural Metformin." Postbiotics are newly emerging as a weight loss aid to suppress hunger signals (ghrelin hormone) much like GLP-1 medications. Pasteurized Akkermansia (postbiotic) is showing great promise with my weight loss clients.

Whether we use GLP-1 agonists in a natural form or in the form of a medication, it's important to understand that as we lose weight, toxins are released into our bodies and can result in a toxic overload on the liver. We need to take a complete multivitamin with B vitamins as these vitamins aid the liver in dumping toxins. In my office, we use Metagenics Phytomulti or Designs for Health B-Supreme. Both products do an excellent job in helping the liver.

Whatever path you choose for weight loss, be sure to cover all of your bases in the form of sustainable lifestyle modifications focusing on diet, exercise, hydration and proper nutrient supplementation.

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