Semaglutide (Ozempic®, Wegovy®)

What is semaglutide used for?

Semaglutide is a medication that is used to treat diabetes and obesity in people 12 years old and older. It has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

How does it work?

Semaglutide works by copying the actions of a hormone called glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) to help lower appetite (feelings of hunger) and increase metabolism. Metabolism is the chemical reactions in the body's cells that help change food into energy. The medicine works in three different ways:

1. It works on the part of the brain that makes us feel hungry and it makes us feel a little bit less hungry.
2. It works on the stomach, and it keeps the stomach full for longer, by emptying the stomach more slowly. This makes us feel less hungry because our stomach is actually still full.
3. It works on the pancreas, the organ that makes insulin. It helps the pancreas to secrete a little bit more insulin to help manage blood sugars and use energy faster.

What are the potential side effects?

The person prescribing semaglutide should discuss the side effects with you. We have included a summary of these potential side effects below. Please let us know if there are any additional questions or if you would like to discuss further.

The most common side effects of semaglutide are:

- stomach upset
- nausea
- vomiting (throwing up)
- decreased appetite
- indigestion (pain or discomfort in the stomach after eating)
- constipation (hard to poop or not often enough)

If this happens, it may help to:

- Eat smaller meals and eat slower.
    - Eat about half of what you usually eat
    - Take about 15 – 20 minutes to eat your meal
- Take semaglutide with food to help decrease stomach upset.
- Eat small meals or snacks throughout the day instead of one large meal.
- Add fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins to meals and snacks.
- Limit foods that are spicy, greasy or fried.
- Limit packaged snacks like cookies, chips, cakes, doughnuts, ice cream.
- Drink water instead of sweet drinks like soda, lemonade, sports drinks.
- Avoid alcohol
- Pay attention to how you are feeling when you eat. When you feel full, stop eating. This will give your stomach time to empty.

- Usually, the nausea goes away. If it doesn't, please call us. We can help find ways to decrease nausea.

Will semaglutide lower my blood sugar?

Although uncommon, blood sugar may be low after taking semaglutide. If you are taking insulin, the medical team may need to change your dose when you start semaglutide. Let the medical team know if you are taking insulin.

Signs of low blood sugar include:

- feeling lightheaded
- shaky
- hungry
- weak
- anxious
- confused
- sweaty

**If you notice these signs, please have something to eat or drink and give us a call so we can think together about next steps.

Are there any other risks to this medication?

The risk of pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas) has been rarely associated with semaglutide. If you have had pancreatitis in the past, semaglutide may not be the right medication for you. Notify the doctor is you have any history of problems with your pancreas.

Symptoms of pancreatitis include:

- pain in your upper stomach area which may travel to your back and may be worse after eating
- stomach area may be tender to the touch
- vomiting, nausea and/or fever

**If you develop any of these symptoms, stop the semaglutide and contact your doctor. They will do a blood test to check for pancreatitis.

Semaglutide has been associated with thyroid cancer in animal studies. You should not use semaglutide if:

1. you have a history of certain types of thyroid cancers or
2. you have a family history of Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia (MEN) syndrome

**Notify your doctor if you develop a lump on your neck, hoarseness (unusual change in your voice), difficulty swallowing or breathing.

How should I take this medication?

- Semaglutide is taken one time each week
- Start with 0.25 mg injection; use this strength once a week for 4 weeks. If you tolerate it well, you can increase to 0.5mg once a week for 6 weeks. Stay at this dose for 4 weeks. Then increase to 1mg once a week.
- Semaglutide can be injected into your stomach, upper thigh, upper arm, or upper buttock. Use a different place for each injection.

- Make sure to count to 5 very S-L-O-W-L-Y while you are injecting semaglutide. Your body only needs a very tiny amount of the medication. You will notice only a tiny amount coming out of the needle.
- You should also count to 5 slowly when you are taking out the needle from your skin. By doing this, you are making sure that your body has gotten all the medication.

How much semaglutide do I take?

To reduce the side effects, it is recommended to ***slowly increase*** the dose of semaglutide until you reach your goal dose**.**

To start Ozempic:

Give 0.25 mg semaglutide once each week for 4 weeks. **Start**: _____

Then give 0.5 mg semaglutide once each week for 6 weeks. **Start**: _____

Then give 1 mg semaglutide once each week for 4 weeks, as the final dose until you see the doctor next. **Start**: _____

To start Wegovy:

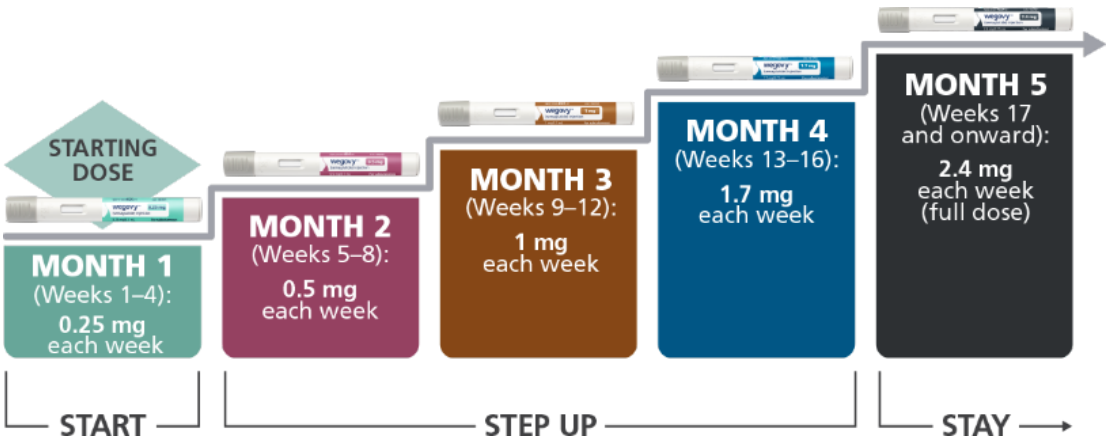
Give 0.25 mg semaglutide once each week for 4 weeks. **Start**: _____

Then give 0.5 mg semaglutide once each week for 4 weeks. **Start**: _____

Then give 1 mg semaglutide once each week for 4 weeks. **Start**: _____

Then give 1.7 mg semaglutide once each week for 4 weeks. **Start**: _____

Then give 2.4 mg semaglutide once each week. This is the final dose. Continue until you see the doctor next. **Start**: _____



How do I store Semaglutide (Ozempic or Wegovy)?

Ozempic/Wegovy can be stored at room temperature, or in the refrigerator, for 30 days after opening. Do not freeze Ozempic/Wegovy or leave the pen in high temperatures more than 100 degrees Farenheit.

Who do I call if I have questions or concerns?

Endocrine Clinic	323-361-4606
Office Hours	Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Who do I call after office hours?	Call 323-361-2403, ask for the endocrinologist on call