

Patient Information: Glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists (GLP1-RA)

Medication names

- Semaglutide once weekly injectable (Ozempic®)
- Dulaglutide once weekly injectable (Trulicity®)
- Liraglutide once daily injectable (Victoza®)
- Semaglutide once daily oral (Rybelsus®)

How can this medication help?

- Reduces your A1c and your weight (which can help with blood pressure and pain)
- May reduce your chances of having a heart attack or stroke
- There is a low risk of hypoglycemia compared to many other diabetes medications

What else should I know?

- Many patients appreciate only having to take this medication once per week
- Once-weekly injections are much more convenient than insulin (which is administered *at least* once a day)
- Most patients agree that once-weekly injections are overall less painful than the finger-pokes they do to check their blood sugar

Information about injections

- It is important to rotate injection sites: you can use the abdomen, arms or thighs for injections
- Don't inject into lumps, scars, hair roots, or moles
- See the product information sheet for more information

Who should NOT take this medication?

You should not use this medication if you:

- are pregnant
- have a personal or family history of medullary thyroid cancer
- have a personal or family history of multiple endocrine neoplasia syndrome type 2

Common side effects

It is not uncommon to have some nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea (also called “gastrointestinal side effects”) when first starting this medication. No one enjoys the first few weeks, but these side effects go away with time as the body gets used to the medication. These side effects may be a sign that the medication is working!

Reducing gastrointestinal side effects:

- Eat smaller, more frequent meals
- Eat slowly and stop eating when full
- Avoid fatty and/or spicy food
- Consider taking this medication at bedtime
- Start at a low dose & increase the dose slowly as recommended by your doctor
- Two other approaches are sometimes tried, although they are not recommended by the manufacturer (off-label practice):
 - Weekly injections can initially be given every 8, 9, or 10 days to start
 - Injectable semaglutide: the usual starting dose of 0.25 mg is achieved by rotating the dial of the pen 20 “clicks”. Some people have had success starting with 10 “clicks” – or about half of the usual starting dose. This dose may not be accurate.

Managing gastrointestinal side effects:

- Stay hydrated
- Check your blood glucose
- Check with your doctor about which medications you need to temporarily stop if you are dehydrated or unable to keep food down
- Speak to your doctor about treating nausea and diarrhea if needed
- If you have nausea and/or vomiting in combination with new unexplained back pain – seek medical attention

Rare side effects to be aware of

Pancreatitis:

- If you have nausea and/or vomiting in combination with new unexplained back pain – seek medical attention

Retinopathy:

- There is a small increased risk of diabetic retinopathy (eye damage related to diabetes). Experts think this may be caused by reducing the A1c too quickly.
- Precautions:
 - Ensure you have had an eye exam in the last year + continue having eye exams every year
 - Ask your eye doctor to send the results to your family doctor
 - Increase the dose of this medication slowly as recommended by your doctor to avoid rapid drops in A1c
 - Report any vision changes immediately

Disclaimer: This information has been compiled subsequent to provider discussions around this topic. It is not intended to be exhaustive, nor a substitute, for routine patient information provided when prescribing.