

# HOW TO PRESCRIBE SEMAGLUTIDE

## Practical Prescribing Guide

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INDICATIONS



MECHANISM OF ACTION



INITIATION & STANDARD TITRATION

## WHAT IS SEMAGLUTIDE?

Semaglutide is a once-weekly glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonist (GLP-1). Semaglutide promotes weight loss through central appetite regulation and slowing gastric emptying while also improving glucose regulation.

## MECHANISM OF ACTION



Increases glucose-dependent insulin secretion



Suppresses glucagon secretion



Delays gastric emptying



Reduces appetite and food cravings

## INDICATIONS (Canada / Clinical Practice)

### AVAILABLE BRANDS (SEMAGLUTIDE)

#### Ozempic™

Health Canada approved for  
Type 2 Diabetes ≥ 18 years

Off-Label: Obesity & weight management (Common practice)

- Available as 0.25/0.5 mg and 1 mg pens
- Each pen has 4 weekly injections

#### Wegovy™

Health Canada approved for chronic  
weight management

- Adults: BMI ≥30, or ≥27 + comorbidity
- Adolescents: ≥12 years with obesity
  - Available as 0.25, 0.5 mg, 1mg, 1.7 mg and 2.4 mg pens
  - Each pen has 4 weekly injections

Consider semaglutide in patients with:

- Obesity despite lifestyle intervention.
- Significant obesity related comorbidity.
- Prediabetes or Type 2 Diabetes.
- Strong hunger, food preoccupation or loss-of-control eating.
- Motivation to participate in long-term lifestyle treatment.

# Frequency

With or without food

## Ozempic™

- Weeks 1 - 4: 0.25 mg weekly
- Week 5: 0.5 mg weekly
- Weeks 5+: 1-2 mg weekly

\*If required and tolerated

## Wegovy™

- Weeks 1 - 4: 0.25mg weekly
- Weeks 5 - 8: 0.5mg weekly
- Weeks 9 - 12: 1.0mg weekly
- Weeks 13 - 16: 1.7 mg weekly
- Weeks 17+: 2.4 mg weekly

\*Maintenance dose

## IMPORTANT



- Escalate only if well tolerated
- Slower titration is appropriate when GI symptoms occur
- Some patients achieve excellent responses at smaller doses

### If a dose is missed

- <5 days late: administer as soon as remembered.
- >5 days late: skip and resume at next scheduled dose

## ADMINISTRATION: PRACTICAL STEPS

- ✓ Demonstrate injection technique  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGB0h51DaiY&t=35s>
- ✓ Review expected GI Side effects
- ✓ Reinforce slow eating and portion reduction
- ✓ Medication should be combined with nutrition, physical activity and behavioural support



## Storage



### Unused pens

- Refrigerate (2-8°C)
- Do not freeze

### In-Use Pens

- May be refrigerated or kept at room temperature up to 8 weeks
- Protect from excessive heat and direct sunlight
- Always keep pen on caps when not in use

## COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

Most occur during dose escalation and improve with time

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Constipation
- Abdominal discomfort
- Diarrhea
- Reflux



## IMPORTANT / RARE ADVERSE EFFECTS

- Gallstones / Cholecystitis
- Acute kidney injury (dehydration related)
- Thyroid C-cell tumour risk
- Consider holding treatment ~1 week prior to operations



## ABSOLUTE CONTRAINDICATIONS

**Discuss:**

- Personal family history of medullary thyroid carcinoma (MTC)
- Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia Syndrome Type 2 (MEN2)
- Previous serious hypersensitivity to semaglutide or formulation components
- History of pancreatitis

Patients should seek medical attention for severe or persistent abdominal pain

**Follow up should include:**

- Weight, HbA1C
- Hydration
- GI tolerance

Consult a mental health specialist before prescribing Semaglutide in individuals with disordered eating



## COUNSELLING TO REDUCE GI SIDE EFFECTS

**Advise patients to:**

- Eat slowly
- Choose smaller meals
- Avoid large, fatty meals
- Stay well hydrated
- Increase fiber gradually
- Separate eating and drinking (if nausea occurs)

## If symptoms develop:

- Maintain current dose longer
- Reduce to the previous tolerated dose if needed
- Delay escalation until symptoms improve

Consider reducing or pausing dose if the patient is losing greater than 2 lbs per week.

## Key Prescriber Pearls

- ✓ Go slow - titration speed will determine success
- ✓ Most side effects are temporary and dose-related
- ✓ Click-counting is highly effective for tolerability
- ✓ Reassess response after ~12 weeks on maintenance dose