

## SEMAGLUTIDE (OZEMPIC®)

### What is semaglutide and how does it work?

Semaglutide (Ozempic®) is a medication in the *GLP-1 agonist* class of medications that can improve blood glucose levels in people with type 2 diabetes. In adults, it can also reduce the future risk of heart disease, stroke, and heart attack.

Ozempic works to improve blood glucose levels by:

1. Helping your body to release more of your own insulin.
2. Reducing the release of your own glucagon (glucagon naturally increases blood glucose levels).
3. Reducing your appetite and slowing digestion time, which may lead to a small amount of weight loss.

Semaglutide works **ONLY** when combined with healthy eating, physical activity, and other treatments you are taking to optimize blood glucose levels.

*Disclaimer: There are many studies in children and adults about this class of medications. Currently it is used in the USA with FDA approval in children >10 years of age, but it is still considered off-label while we are awaiting Health Canada approval.*

### What side effects do we expect?

The most common side effects of semaglutide may include nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach (abdominal) pain, and constipation. These symptoms usually only present in the first 1-4 weeks and will get better over time. If you experience nausea, here are some tips that you might find helpful:

- Slowly eat smaller, more frequent meals.
- Eat foods that are light and bland, like saltine crackers or plain bread.
- Avoid fried, greasy, or sweet foods.
- Drink clear or ice-cold drinks (water is best, no pop or juice).

### How do you start taking semaglutide?

Ozempic is a once-a-week injection, given on the same day, exactly as prescribed by your diabetes team.

<b>Before starting semaglutide</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review with your team if this is right for you.</li> <li>2. Your Diabetes Doctor will obtain BC PharmaCare Special Authority for coverage.</li> <li>3. Your Diabetes Nurse will reach out and let you when you have received approval and will arrange teaching about administering this medication.</li> <li>4. See video <a href="https://ozempic.ca/administration-video-EN">https://ozempic.ca/administration-video-EN</a> for further details.</li> </ol>
<b>Weeks 1-4</b>	Start with giving 0.25 mg once a week for the first 4 weeks. This will give your body a chance to get used to the medication.
<b>Week 2</b>	Check-in with Diabetes Nurse.
<b>Week 5</b>	Increase the semaglutide dose to 0.5 mg once a week
<b>Week 7</b>	Check-in with Diabetes Nurse.
<b>Week 12</b>	Diabetes team meeting in clinic with repeat A1C test.

- You can take semaglutide with or without food.
- Store your medication in the refrigerator until opened. Once opened, you can keep it at room temperature up to 8 weeks.
- If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as possible. If more than 5 days have passed, skip the missed dose and take your next dose on the regularly scheduled day.
- You may change the day of the week you use semaglutide, so long as your last dose was taken 2 or more days before.

#### How to be successful with semaglutide:

- Take your medication as prescribed.
- Continue to watch what and how much you eat:
  - Do not skip meals.
  - Avoid juice, pop, chocolate milk, iced tea or other sweetened beverages.
  - Try to include a fruit and/or a vegetable in each meal.
- Move your body by walking, taking the stairs, biking, or participating in a sport or activity that you like! Try to aim for a goal of 45 to 60 minutes of body movement per day.
- Maintain a healthy sleep routine with 7-9 hours sleep/night for children 12 years and older.
- Check your blood glucose as directed by your healthcare provider.

#### When to contact the Diabetes Team at [dcnurse@cw.bc.ca](mailto:dcnurse@cw.bc.ca) OR phone 604-875-2868:

- If you are having frequent low blood glucose levels (hypoglycemia).
- If you have severe nausea or pain in your stomach area (abdomen) that will not go away, with or without vomiting. You may feel the pain from your abdomen to your back.
- If you have changes in vision, please let you doctor know.
- If you have allergic reactions like swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat; problems breathing or swallowing; severe rash or itching.