

The menopause *Specialists*

Your Guide to GLP-1 Agonists for Weight Loss

Introduction

Welcome to your comprehensive guide on GLP-1 agonists for weight loss. This booklet is designed to provide you with essential information as you begin your journey with these medicines. We will cover how GLP-1 agonists work, how to administer them, what to expect regarding weight loss, potential side effects, and crucial lifestyle advice encompassing diet, exercise, and managing related health conditions like cholesterol, blood glucose, and blood pressure. Our goal is to empower you with the knowledge to safely and effectively use GLP-1 agonists and achieve your health goals.

Understanding GLP-1 Agonists

What are GLP-1 Agonists?

GLP-1 (Glucagon-Like Peptide-1) agonists are a class of medicines that mimic a natural hormone produced in your small intestine. This hormone plays a vital role in regulating your appetite, digestion, and blood sugar levels. By enhancing the effects of this natural hormone, GLP-1 agonists help you manage your weight and improve various aspects of your metabolic health.

How Do GLP-1 Agonists Work for Weight Loss?

GLP-1 agonists work through several key mechanisms to promote weight loss: * **Appetite Regulation:** They act on areas of your brain that control hunger and satiety, helping you feel fuller for longer and reducing your overall food intake. * **Slowing Stomach Emptying:** These medicines slow down how quickly food leaves your stomach. This not only contributes to a prolonged feeling of fullness but also helps to prevent rapid spikes in blood sugar after meals. * **Blood Sugar Control:** While primarily known for weight loss, GLP-1 agonists also stimulate your pancreas to release insulin when blood sugar levels are high and suppress the release of glucagon (a hormone that raises blood sugar). This dual action helps to lower and stabilise blood sugar levels.

Treatment Aims and Target BMI

What are the Treatment Aims?

The primary treatment aim when using GLP-1 agonists for weight loss is to achieve a significant and sustainable reduction in body weight. Studies show that patients can achieve an average weight loss of 15% to 25% of their initial body weight over approximately one year. Beyond weight reduction, these medicines offer additional health benefits, including improvements in blood sugar control, lipid profiles (fats in the blood), blood pressure, and a reduced risk of heart and kidney disease.

Who is a Candidate? (Target BMI)

GLP-1 agonists are typically approved for individuals with: * **Obesity:** Defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or higher. * **Overweight with Coexisting Conditions:** Individuals with a BMI between 25 and 29.9 who also have weight-related health issues such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or prediabetes, where weight loss would significantly improve these conditions.

Your healthcare provider will assess your individual health profile to determine if GLP-1 agonists are the right treatment option for you.

Administering Your GLP-1 Agonist Medicine

GLP-1 agonists are usually administered as injectable medicines. It is crucial to follow your healthcare provider's specific instructions regarding the dosage, frequency, and proper injection technique. While specific instructions vary by medicine, here are general guidelines: * **Injection Site:** Injections are typically given into the fatty tissue just under the skin (subcutaneously), often in the abdomen, thigh, or upper arm. * **Frequency:** The frequency of injections varies. Some medicines are taken once daily, while others are administered once weekly. There are also oral tablet forms available for some GLP-1 agonists that are taken daily. * **Proper Technique:** Your healthcare provider or a practice nurse will demonstrate the correct way to prepare and administer your injection. Always use a new needle for each injection and dispose of used needles safely in a sharps container. Never share your medicine or needles with anyone else. * **Storage:** Store your medicine as directed by your pharmacist or healthcare provider, typically in the refrigerator before first use and at room temperature or refrigerated after first use, depending on the specific product.

Potential Side Effects and Recognising Serious Adverse Effects

Like all medicines, GLP-1 agonists can cause side effects. Most side effects are mild and tend to decrease over time as your body adjusts to the medicine. However, it is important to be aware of both common and serious adverse effects.

Common Side Effects

These side effects are most likely to occur when you first start the medicine or when your dose is increased: * **Gastrointestinal Issues:** Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation, and indigestion (upset stomach) are very common. Eating smaller meals, avoiding fatty foods, and eating slowly can help manage these symptoms. * **Decreased Appetite:** This is an expected effect that contributes to weight loss. * **Headaches** * **Dizziness** * **Mild Tachycardia:** A slight increase in heart rate. * **Injection Site Reactions:** Temporary mild itchiness, redness, or bruising at the injection site.

Recognising Serious Adverse Effects (When to Seek Medical Attention)

While rare, some serious side effects require immediate medical attention. It is vital to know the signs and symptoms:

- * **Pancreatitis (Inflammation of the Pancreas):** Symptoms include severe, persistent abdominal pain that may radiate to your back, with or without vomiting. **If you experience these symptoms, contact your healthcare provider immediately or seek emergency care.**
- * **Medullary Thyroid Cancer:** Although extremely rare and primarily observed in animal studies, GLP-1 agonists carry a warning for this condition. Do not use these medicines if you have a personal or family history of medullary thyroid carcinoma or Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia syndrome type 2 (MEN 2). Your doctor will discuss this risk with you.
- * **Acute Kidney Injury:** Symptoms may include a decrease in urination, swelling in your legs or feet, or feeling unusually tired. **Report any such symptoms to your healthcare provider.**
- * **Worsening Diabetic Retinopathy:** If you have pre-existing diabetic eye disease, there is a risk of it worsening. Regular eye exams are important.
- * **Severe Allergic Reaction (Anaphylaxis):** This is a medical emergency. Symptoms include: * Shortness of breath or wheezing * Hives or a widespread rash * Swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat * Difficulty swallowing * Rapid heart rate * Severe dizziness or fainting * Abdominal pain, nausea, or vomiting **If you experience any symptoms of anaphylaxis, call emergency services (e.g., 999) immediately.**
- * **Hypoglycaemia (Low Blood Sugar):** The risk of low blood sugar is generally low when GLP-1 agonists are used alone. However, the risk increases significantly if you are also taking other medicines that lower blood sugar, such as insulin or sulphonylureas. Symptoms of hypoglycaemia include: * Shaking or trembling * Sweating and chills * Dizziness or light-headedness * Weakness or fatigue * Faster heart rate * Intense hunger * Difficulty thinking or concentrating * Pale skin * Nausea **If you experience symptoms of hypoglycaemia, consume a quick source of sugar (e.g., glucose tablets, fruit juice, non-diet fizzy drink, hard sweets) and inform your healthcare provider.**

Lifestyle for Success: Diet, Nutrition, and Exercise

Achieving lasting weight loss and improving your overall health with GLP-1 agonists is most effective when combined with comprehensive lifestyle changes. This section provides detailed guidance on diet, nutrition, and exercise.

General Lifestyle Principles

- **Balanced Eating:** Focus on a diet rich in whole, unprocessed foods. This means prioritising fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins while limiting highly processed foods, sugary drinks, and excessive unhealthy fats.
- **Regular Physical Activity:** Incorporate both aerobic and strength-training exercises into your routine. Consistency is key.
- **Stress Management:** Chronic stress can impact your weight and metabolic health. Find healthy ways to manage stress, such as meditation, yoga, hobbies, or spending time in nature.
- **Adequate Sleep:** Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night. Poor sleep can disrupt hormones that regulate appetite and metabolism.
- **Hydration:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day. Water is essential for all bodily functions and can help with satiety.
- **Mindful Eating:** Pay attention to your body's hunger and fullness cues. Eat slowly, savour your food, and avoid distractions during meals.

Diet and Nutrition Advice

Calorie Management

To lose weight, you need to consume fewer calories than your body uses. Your healthcare provider or a registered dietitian can help you determine an appropriate calorie target. A common approach is to create a daily calorie deficit of 500-750 calories, which can lead to a steady and sustainable weight loss of 1-2 pounds per week.

Food Choices for Optimal Health and Weight Loss

- **Prioritise Whole Foods:** Build your meals around whole, unprocessed foods. These are typically nutrient-dense and higher in fibre, promoting satiety.
 - **Fruits and Vegetables:** Aim for a wide variety of colourful fruits and vegetables. They are packed with vitamins, minerals, and fibre, and are low in calories.
 - **Whole Grains:** Choose whole grains like oats, brown rice, quinoa, whole-wheat bread, and pasta over refined grains. They provide sustained energy

and fibre.

- **Lean Proteins:** Include sources like chicken breast, turkey, fish, eggs, Greek yoghurt, cottage cheese, beans, lentils, and tofu. Protein is crucial for satiety and muscle maintenance.
- **Healthy Fats:** Incorporate monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats found in avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil. These fats are important for hormone production and nutrient absorption.
- **Limit Processed Foods:** Minimise intake of foods high in added sugars, unhealthy fats, and sodium, such as fast food, sugary drinks, pastries, and most packaged snacks.
- **Fibre-Rich Foods:** Soluble fibre, found in foods like oats, beans, apples, and citrus fruits, can help you feel full, stabilise blood sugar, and lower cholesterol.

Maintaining Muscle Mass and Protein Intake

Weight loss often involves losing both fat and some muscle. However, preserving muscle mass is vital because muscle burns more calories at rest than fat, contributing to a healthier metabolism and preventing weight regain. Here's how to prioritise muscle maintenance: * **Adequate Protein Intake:** This is perhaps the most critical dietary factor for muscle preservation during weight loss. Aim for a higher protein intake than typically recommended for sedentary individuals. A good target is generally **1.2 to 1.6 grams of protein per kilogram of your target body weight per day**. For example, if your target weight is 70 kg (about 11 stone), you would aim for approximately 84 to 112 grams of protein daily. Distribute your protein intake evenly throughout the day across all meals and snacks. * **Resistance Training:** Combine your protein intake with regular resistance (strength) training. This type of exercise signals your body to retain and even build muscle, even in a calorie deficit.

Exercise Advice

Exercise is a powerful tool for weight loss, muscle maintenance, and overall health. A balanced exercise programme includes both aerobic and resistance training.

Aerobic Exercise (Cardio)

- **Recommendations:** Aim for at least **150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity** (e.g., brisk walking, cycling, swimming) or **75 to 150 minutes of**

vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (e.g., running, high-intensity interval training) per week. You can break this down into shorter sessions throughout the week.

- **Benefits:** Aerobic exercise burns calories, improves cardiovascular health, enhances endurance, and can help reduce overall body fat.

Resistance Training (Strength Training)

- **Importance:** Resistance training is crucial for preserving and building muscle mass, which is essential for maintaining a healthy metabolism during and after weight loss. It also improves strength, bone density, and body composition.
- **Recommendations:** Engage in resistance training for **2-3 days per week**, targeting all major muscle groups. This can include:
 - **Weightlifting:** Using free weights (dumbbells, barbells) or weight machines.
 - **Bodyweight Exercises:** Push-ups, squats, lunges, planks, and triceps dips.
 - **Resistance Bands:** A versatile option for strength training at home or while travelling.
- **Progression:** As you get stronger, gradually increase the weight, resistance, or number of repetitions to continue challenging your muscles.

Combining Aerobic and Resistance Training

The most effective exercise strategy for weight loss and muscle maintenance is to combine both aerobic and resistance training. This approach maximises calorie expenditure, preserves muscle, and improves overall fitness.

Managing Related Health Conditions

GLP-1 agonists, combined with lifestyle changes, can significantly improve various health markers. This section focuses on managing cholesterol, blood glucose, and blood pressure.

Cholesterol Management

Understanding Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance vital for building healthy cells, producing hormones, and aiding digestion. However, too much of certain types of cholesterol can lead to serious health problems. * **LDL (Low-Density Lipoprotein) Cholesterol:** Often called "bad" cholesterol. High levels contribute to plaque buildup in your arteries, narrowing them and increasing your risk of heart attacks and strokes. * **HDL (High-Density Lipoprotein) Cholesterol:** Known as "good" cholesterol. HDL helps remove excess cholesterol from your arteries, transporting it back to the liver for removal from the body, thus protecting your heart. * **Triglycerides:** These are a type of fat in your blood that your body uses for energy. High levels of triglycerides, often seen with high LDL and low HDL, also increase your risk of heart disease.

Why is Cholesterol Management Important?

Controlling your cholesterol levels is crucial for preventing atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD), which includes heart attacks and strokes. High levels of LDL cholesterol and triglycerides contribute to the hardening and narrowing of arteries, impeding blood flow and increasing your risk of serious cardiovascular events. Lowering your LDL cholesterol has been consistently shown to reduce these risks.

Dietary Strategies to Lower LDL Cholesterol and Triglycerides

- **Reduce Saturated and Trans Fats:** Limit foods high in saturated fats (found in red meat, full-fat dairy, and some processed foods) and avoid trans fats (often found in fried foods and baked goods). These fats significantly raise LDL cholesterol.
- **Increase Soluble Fibre:** Foods rich in soluble fibre (e.g., oats, barley, apples, citrus fruits, beans, lentils) help reduce the absorption of cholesterol into your bloodstream.
- **Eat Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** Found in fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, tuna), flaxseeds, chia seeds, and walnuts, omega-3s are effective in lowering triglyceride levels.
- **Limit Added Sugars and Refined Carbohydrates:** High intake of simple sugars and refined carbohydrates can significantly increase triglyceride levels.

- **Choose Healthy Fats:** Replace unhealthy fats with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats found in olive oil, avocados, nuts, and seeds.

Dietary Strategies to Improve HDL Cholesterol

While diet has a smaller impact on raising HDL compared to lowering LDL, certain dietary choices can help: * **Monounsaturated and Polyunsaturated Fats:** Incorporate olive oil, avocados, nuts, and seeds into your diet. * **Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** Regular consumption of fatty fish and other omega-3 sources can contribute to healthier lipid profiles. * **Weight Management:** Achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight is one of the most effective ways to improve HDL levels. * **Regular Exercise:** Physical activity is a key factor in raising HDL cholesterol.

Blood Glucose Control

Why is Blood Glucose Control Important for Health?

Maintaining stable blood glucose levels is paramount for preventing or delaying serious health complications, especially if you have prediabetes or diabetes. Uncontrolled high blood glucose can lead to: * **Long-Term Complications:** Damage to your heart, kidneys, nerves, and eyes, increasing the risk of heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure, nerve pain, and vision loss. * **Impaired Immune Function:** Making you more susceptible to infections. * **Energy and Mood Fluctuations:** Poorly controlled blood sugar can cause fatigue, irritability, and difficulty concentrating.

By keeping your blood glucose within a healthy range, you can protect your organs, maintain better energy levels, and significantly improve your long-term health and quality of life.

Diet for Prediabetes and Diabetes

Dietary management is a cornerstone of blood glucose control. The principles for both prediabetes and diabetes focus on balanced meals and mindful eating: * **Healthy Carbohydrates:** Choose complex carbohydrates that are high in fibre, such as whole grains (oats, brown rice, quinoa), fruits, vegetables, and legumes. These are digested slowly, preventing rapid blood sugar spikes. Limit refined carbohydrates like white bread, sugary cereals, and sweets. * **Portion Control:** Be mindful of portion sizes, especially for carbohydrate-containing foods. Using a plate method (half non-starchy vegetables, a quarter lean protein, a quarter healthy carbohydrates) can be helpful. *

Lean Proteins: Include lean protein sources like chicken, fish, eggs, Greek yoghurt, beans, and lentils. Protein helps with satiety and has a minimal impact on blood sugar levels. * **Healthy Fats:** Incorporate healthy fats from avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil. These fats can help you feel full and have a minimal effect on blood sugar. * **Non-Starchy Vegetables:** Make these the largest part of your meals. Examples include leafy greens, broccoli, cauliflower, bell peppers, and carrots. * **Regular Meal Times:** Eating meals at consistent times each day can help stabilise blood sugar levels and prevent extreme highs and lows. * **Mediterranean Diet:** This eating pattern, rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, and olive oil, with moderate amounts of fish and poultry, is highly recommended for blood glucose control.

Blood Pressure Management

Risks of High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure (hypertension) is a silent killer because it often has no symptoms but can lead to severe health problems. Uncontrolled high blood pressure significantly increases your risk of: * **Heart Attack and Stroke:** High blood pressure damages and stiffens arteries, making them more vulnerable to plaque buildup and blockages. * **Heart Failure:** The heart has to work harder to pump blood, leading to thickening and weakening of the heart muscle. * **Kidney Disease:** Damaged blood vessels in the kidneys impair their ability to filter waste. * **Vision Loss:** Damage to the delicate blood vessels in the eyes. * **Peripheral Artery Disease:** Narrowing of arteries in the limbs, which can cause pain and increase the risk of infection.

Dietary Strategies to Control Blood Pressure

Diet is a powerful tool for managing and lowering blood pressure: * **DASH Diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension):** This eating plan is specifically designed to lower blood pressure and is highly effective. It emphasises: * Plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. * Low-fat or fat-free dairy products. * Fish, poultry, beans, nuts, and vegetable oils. * Limiting foods high in saturated fat, cholesterol, and trans fats. * Reducing sweets and sugary beverages. * **Reduce Sodium Intake:** A significant reduction in dietary sodium can dramatically lower blood pressure. Aim for less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium per day, and ideally closer to 1,500 mg for many individuals. To achieve this: * Avoid processed foods, canned soups, cured meats, and fast food, which are typically very high in sodium. * Read food labels carefully. * Use herbs, spices, lemon juice, and vinegar to flavour your food instead of

salt. * **Increase Potassium Intake:** Potassium helps balance sodium levels in your body and can lower blood pressure. Good sources include fruits (bananas, oranges, melons), vegetables (spinach, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes), and beans. * **Limit Alcohol Consumption:** Excessive alcohol intake can raise blood pressure. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation: up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men. * **Magnesium and Calcium:** Ensure adequate intake of these minerals, found in leafy green vegetables, nuts, seeds, and dairy products, as they play a role in blood pressure regulation.

7-Day Sample Meal Plan

This meal plan is a general guide and can be adapted to your preferences and dietary needs. It focuses on whole foods, lean protein, healthy fats, and plenty of fibre. Portion sizes should be adjusted based on your individual calorie and protein targets.

- **Monday**

- **Breakfast:** Porridge made with oats, semi-skimmed milk, and a handful of berries.
- **Lunch:** Large mixed salad with grilled chicken breast, a variety of colourful vegetables, and a light vinaigrette dressing.
- **Dinner:** Baked salmon fillet with roasted sweet potatoes and steamed green beans.
- **Snack:** A small apple and a handful of almonds.

- **Tuesday**

- **Breakfast:** Greek yoghurt with a sprinkle of seeds (e.g., chia, flax) and a few chopped nuts.
- **Lunch:** Leftover baked salmon and vegetables from dinner.
- **Dinner:** Lentil and vegetable soup with a slice of whole-wheat bread.
- **Snack:** A pear.

- **Wednesday**

- **Breakfast:** Scrambled eggs (2) with spinach and a slice of whole-wheat toast.

- **Lunch:** Tuna salad (made with Greek yoghurt instead of mayonnaise) in a whole-wheat pitta with cucumber and lettuce.
- **Dinner:** Turkey mince stir-fry with brown rice and a mix of colourful vegetables (e.g., peppers, broccoli, carrots).
- **Snack:** A small pot of cottage cheese.
- **Thursday**
 - **Breakfast:** Smoothie made with a scoop of protein powder, a banana, a handful of spinach, and unsweetened almond milk.
 - **Lunch:** Leftover turkey stir-fry.
 - **Dinner:** Grilled cod with a side of quinoa and a large portion of steamed asparagus.
 - **Snack:** A handful of walnuts.
- **Friday**
 - **Breakfast:** Porridge with a spoonful of nut butter and a sliced banana.
 - **Lunch:** Chicken and avocado salad with mixed greens and a lemon-tahini dressing.
 - **Dinner:** Homemade chicken and vegetable skewers with a side of couscous.
 - **Snack:** An orange.
- **Saturday**
 - **Breakfast:** Two boiled eggs with a slice of rye bread.
 - **Lunch:** Leftover chicken and vegetable skewers.
 - **Dinner:** Lean beef and bean chilli with a small portion of brown rice.
 - **Snack:** A small pot of Greek yoghurt.
- **Sunday**
 - **Breakfast:** Omelette with mushrooms, tomatoes, and a sprinkle of low-fat cheese.
 - **Lunch:** Leftover chilli.

- **Dinner:** Roast chicken (skin removed) with roasted root vegetables (e.g., carrots, parsnips) and plenty of green vegetables.
- **Snack:** A handful of mixed berries.

7-Day Vegetarian Sample Meal Plan

This vegetarian meal plan is a general guide, focusing on plant-based protein, healthy fats, and plenty of fibre to support weight loss and overall health. Adjust portion sizes based on your individual calorie and protein targets.

- **Monday**

- **Breakfast:** Porridge made with oats, unsweetened plant-based milk (e.g., almond, soy), and a handful of mixed berries.
- **Lunch:** Large mixed salad with chickpeas, quinoa, a variety of colourful vegetables, and a lemon-tahini dressing.
- **Dinner:** Lentil shepherd's pie with a sweet potato topping and a side of steamed broccoli.
- **Snack:** A small apple and a handful of walnuts.

- **Tuesday**

- **Breakfast:** Greek-style plant-based yoghurt with a sprinkle of seeds (e.g., chia, flax) and a few chopped nuts.
- **Lunch:** Leftover lentil shepherd's pie.
- **Dinner:** Black bean burgers (homemade or low-sodium shop-bought) in wholemeal buns with a large side salad.
- **Snack:** A pear.

- **Wednesday**

- **Breakfast:** Scrambled tofu with spinach, mushrooms, and a slice of wholemeal toast.
- **Lunch:** Hummus and vegetable wrap (wholemeal tortilla) with grated carrots, cucumber, and bell peppers.
- **Dinner:** Vegetable and chickpea curry with brown rice.

- **Snack:** A small pot of edamame beans.
- **Thursday**
 - **Breakfast:** Smoothie made with plant-based protein powder, a banana, a handful of spinach, and unsweetened almond milk.
 - **Lunch:** Leftover vegetable and chickpea curry.
 - **Dinner:** Halloumi and vegetable skewers (peppers, courgettes, cherry tomatoes) with quinoa.
 - **Snack:** A handful of almonds.
- **Friday**
 - **Breakfast:** Overnight oats with plant-based milk, topped with berries and a spoonful of nut butter.
 - **Lunch:** Large mixed salad with hard-boiled eggs (if ovo-vegetarian) or extra chickpeas, and a light vinaigrette.
 - **Dinner:** Wholemeal pasta with a rich tomato and lentil ragu.
 - **Snack:** An orange.
- **Saturday**
 - **Breakfast:** Baked beans on two slices of wholemeal toast.
 - **Lunch:** Leftover pasta with lentil ragu.
 - **Dinner:** Vegetarian chilli con carne (using kidney beans and other pulses) with a small portion of brown rice and a dollop of plant-based sour cream.
 - **Snack:** A small pot of Greek-style plant-based yoghurt.
- **Sunday**
 - **Breakfast:** Pancakes (wholemeal flour) topped with fresh fruit and a drizzle of maple syrup (in moderation).
 - **Lunch:** Leftover vegetarian chilli.
 - **Dinner:** Nut roast with roasted root vegetables (e.g., carrots, parsnips) and plenty of green vegetables.
 - **Snack:** A handful of mixed berries.

Sample Exercise Plan for Weight Loss and Muscle Maintenance

This exercise plan is designed for beginners and focuses on a combination of aerobic and resistance training to support weight loss and preserve muscle mass. Remember to listen to your body, warm up before each session, and cool down afterwards. Consult your healthcare provider before starting any new exercise programme.

Weekly Schedule Overview

- **Monday:** Resistance Training (Full Body)
- **Tuesday:** Moderate-Intensity Aerobic Exercise
- **Wednesday:** Rest or Active Recovery (e.g., light walk, stretching)
- **Thursday:** Resistance Training (Full Body)
- **Friday:** Moderate-Intensity Aerobic Exercise
- **Saturday:** Active Recovery or Longer Moderate-Intensity Aerobic Exercise
- **Sunday:** Rest

Resistance Training (2-3 times per week)

Perform 2-3 sets of 8-12 repetitions for each exercise. Choose a weight that challenges you by the last few repetitions while maintaining good form. Rest for 60-90 seconds between sets.

Warm-up (5-10 minutes): Light cardio (e.g., marching on the spot, arm circles, leg swings).

Exercises: 1. **Squats:** Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, lower your hips as if sitting in a chair, keeping your chest up. (Bodyweight or holding light dumbbells). 2. **Push-ups:** On your knees or toes, lower your chest towards the floor, keeping your body in a straight line. (Can be done against a wall or on an incline if full push-ups are too challenging). 3. **Dumbbell Rows:** Bend at your hips, keeping your back straight, and pull a dumbbell towards your chest. (If no dumbbells, use resistance bands or bodyweight rows using a sturdy table). 4. **Lunges:** Step forward with one leg, lowering your hips until both knees are bent at approximately a 90-degree angle. Alternate legs. (Bodyweight or holding light dumbbells). 5. **Plank:** Hold a push-up position,

supporting yourself on your forearms and toes, keeping your body in a straight line from head to heels. Hold for 30-60 seconds. 6. **Overhead Press:** Stand or sit, holding dumbbells at shoulder height, then press them directly overhead. (If no dumbbells, use resistance bands).

Cool-down (5-10 minutes): Gentle stretching for the muscles worked.

Aerobic Exercise (2-3 times per week)

Aim for 30-45 minutes per session at a moderate intensity (you should be able to talk but not sing).

Examples: * Brisk walking (outdoors or on a treadmill) * Cycling (stationary bike or outdoors) * Swimming * Dancing * Elliptical trainer * Low-impact aerobics video

Progression: As your fitness improves, gradually increase the duration or intensity of your workouts. For resistance training, increase the weight, repetitions, or sets. For aerobic exercise, increase the time or speed.

Remember, consistency is more important than intensity when you are starting out. Find activities you enjoy to make exercise a sustainable part of your routine.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: How quickly will I lose weight on a GLP-1 agonist? A: Weight loss varies from person to person. Some people start to lose weight within the first few weeks, while for others it may be more gradual. The most significant weight loss typically occurs over several months to a year. Consistency with your diet and exercise plan is key to maximising the effects of the medication.

Q: Will I have to take this medication forever? A: GLP-1 agonists are typically used for long-term weight management. Obesity is considered a chronic condition, and if you stop taking the medication, you may regain the weight you have lost. Your healthcare provider will discuss the long-term plan with you.

Q: What should I do if I feel very nauseous? A: Nausea is a common side effect, especially when you first start the medication or increase your dose. To manage it, try eating smaller, more frequent meals, avoiding fatty or greasy foods, and eating slowly.

If nausea is severe or persistent, contact your healthcare provider, as they may be able to adjust your dose or provide other advice.

Q: Can I drink alcohol while taking a GLP-1 agonist? A: It is best to limit alcohol consumption. Alcohol can affect your blood sugar levels and contains empty calories, which can hinder your weight loss efforts. If you do drink, do so in moderation and be aware of how it affects you. Discuss this with your healthcare provider.

Q: What if I miss a dose? A: If you miss a dose, what you should do depends on the specific medication you are taking. Refer to the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine, or contact your pharmacist or healthcare provider for advice.

Q: Do I still need to diet and exercise? A: Yes. GLP-1 agonists are a tool to help you lose weight, but they are most effective when used in combination with a healthy diet and regular exercise. Lifestyle changes are crucial for long-term success and overall health improvement.

Q: Will the weight loss affect my face or make me look older? A: Significant weight loss can lead to changes in facial appearance, including a loss of volume. This is a natural consequence of losing fat from all over the body. Staying well-hydrated and eating a nutrient-rich diet can help support skin health.

Conclusion

Starting GLP-1 agonists for weight loss is a significant step towards improving your health. By understanding how these medicines work, adhering to proper administration, and actively incorporating the lifestyle advice on diet, exercise, and managing related health conditions, you can maximise your chances of success. Remember, this journey is a partnership with your healthcare team. Always communicate any concerns or questions you have. Your commitment to these changes will lead to a healthier, more vibrant you.

Disclaimer: This booklet provides general information and is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult with your healthcare provider before starting any new medicine or making significant changes to your diet or exercise routine.