# Tony Blair urges NHS to widen access to weight-loss injections for 14.7 million



Former Prime Minister Tony Blair has proposed that a significant expansion of access to weight-loss injections is necessary for combating obesity in the UK. The Tony Blair Institute suggests that widened eligibility could enable around 14.7 million people to obtain these medications, significantly relieving pressure on the NHS and improving overall population health. Currently, the National Health Service (NHS) restricts these treatments to approximately 50,000 patients annually, targeting only those with severe obesity as defined by a body mass index (BMI) over 35.

The current obesity crisis is a major public health concern, with around 64% of British adults classified as overweight or obese. This condition produces considerable strains on the healthcare system, highlighting inequalities in access to treatment, particularly in deprived areas. The Tony Blair Institute's recommendations include not only lowering the eligibility criteria but also allowing over-the-counter access to these medications through community pharmacies.

Drugs such as Ozempic and Wegovy are touted as effective solutions, with trials showing that patients can lose up to 20% of their body weight. Moreover, the economic implications of obesity are stark: research indicates that obesity-related conditions can result in decreased productivity, with users of these medications reportedly taking fewer sick days and being more engaged in work and community activities. A recent study from the European Congress of Obesity highlighted that the use of semaglutide could translate into an annual productivity boost of £1,127 per patient, cumulatively benefitting the UK's economy by approximately £4.5 billion if broader access is achieved.

The NHS's current rollout strategy has faced criticism for being too slow, particularly given the rising obesity rates predicted over the next decade. Economists project that expanding access could yield a cumulative fiscal benefit of around £52 billion by 2050, a figure that calls attention to the long-term economic advantages of a healthier populace. The proposed measures could assist in reversing these troubling trends, as the NHS battles to manage its resources effectively.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting has acknowledged the necessity for the government to take decisive action, noting that the burden of obesity not only hinders the NHS but also significantly affects individuals’ quality of life. As such, pilot schemes incorporating digital technologies are being explored to provide innovative approaches for delivering these treatments more widely. The advent of Eli Lilly’s weight-loss drug Mounjaro, also known as Zepbound, expected to roll out through the NHS by early 2025, exemplifies the integration of new therapies into obesity management.

Despite notable public interest in weight-loss injections, perspectives remain mixed. A survey revealed that 37% of adults support NHS provision, while 32% oppose it. This division reflects ongoing debates about the immediate financial implications versus the long-term health benefits of an effective obesity treatment strategy.

As the NHS attempts to balance its resources while managing rising healthcare demands, the transformative potential of adjusted access to weight-loss drugs becomes increasingly apparent. The suggested initiatives not only endorse a proactive approach to obesity treatment but also highlight the urgent need for a system that prioritises health equity across the nation.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-14729447/Tony-Blair-weight-loss-injections-nhs.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-14729447/Tony-Blair-weight-loss-injections-nhs.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/englands-nhs-offer-lillys-weight-loss-drugs-some-patients-2024-10-03/), [[7]](https://www.gbnews.com/health/obesity-treatment-nhs-hospitals-quadruples)
3. Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-14729447/Tony-Blair-weight-loss-injections-nhs.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.joinlevity.co.uk/posts/weight-loss-injections-nhs)
4. Paragraph 4: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-14729447/Tony-Blair-weight-loss-injections-nhs.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/10/03/weight-loss-jabs-mounjaro-nhs-patients/), [[5]](https://pharmaceutical-journal.com/article/news/british-public-divided-on-whether-nhs-should-offer-weight-loss-jabs-survey-results-show)
5. Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-14729447/Tony-Blair-weight-loss-injections-nhs.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/lilly-obesity-drug-mounjaro-to-be-offered-in-britains-nhs-after-watchdog-nod-2024-12-23/)
6. Paragraph 6: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-14729447/Tony-Blair-weight-loss-injections-nhs.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.joinlevity.co.uk/posts/weight-loss-injections-nhs)
7. Paragraph 7: [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/englands-nhs-offer-lillys-weight-loss-drugs-some-patients-2024-10-03/), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/lilly-obesity-drug-mounjaro-to-be-offered-in-britains-nhs-after-watchdog-nod-2024-12-23/), [[6]](https://www.joinlevity.co.uk/posts/weight-loss-injections-nhs), [[7]](https://www.gbnews.com/health/obesity-treatment-nhs-hospitals-quadruples)
8. Paragraph 8: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-14729447/Tony-Blair-weight-loss-injections-nhs.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://pharmaceutical-journal.com/article/news/british-public-divided-on-whether-nhs-should-offer-weight-loss-jabs-survey-results-show)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-14729447/Tony-Blair-weight-loss-injections-nhs.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/englands-nhs-offer-lillys-weight-loss-drugs-some-patients-2024-10-03/> - In October 2024, England's National Health Service (NHS) announced plans to offer Eli Lilly's weight-loss drug, Mounjaro (known as Zepbound in the U.S.), to approximately 250,000 patients over three years. Initially, the drug will target obese individuals with at least three weight-related health conditions, including hypertension, sleep apnea, and cardiovascular issues. This phased rollout aims to address the high obesity rates in England, where about 64% of adults are overweight or obese. The initiative also includes testing new services, such as digital technologies, to determine cost-effectiveness.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/lilly-obesity-drug-mounjaro-to-be-offered-in-britains-nhs-after-watchdog-nod-2024-12-23/> - In December 2024, Eli Lilly's obesity drug, Mounjaro, received approval from the UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to be offered through the NHS starting in March 2025. The drug is recommended for individuals with a body mass index (BMI) over 35 and at least one weight-related condition, such as heart disease or type-2 diabetes. Mounjaro, a weekly injection, belongs to the GLP-1 analogues class and has shown an average weight loss of nearly 23% in clinical trials. Approximately 3.4 million people in the UK are eligible for this treatment.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/10/03/weight-loss-jabs-mounjaro-nhs-patients/> - In October 2024, the NHS announced plans to roll out weight-loss injections of Mounjaro to 1.6 million people over the next 12 years. The phased rollout prioritizes individuals with a BMI of 40 or more and other health conditions, with the goal of offering the jabs to nearly a quarter of a million people with a BMI of 35 or more and weight-related health problems over the next three years. Mounjaro has been dubbed the 'King Kong' of slimming jabs due to its powerful impact.
5. <https://pharmaceutical-journal.com/article/news/british-public-divided-on-whether-nhs-should-offer-weight-loss-jabs-survey-results-show> - A survey conducted by Ipsos between October and November 2024 revealed that 37% of British adults support the NHS offering weight-loss injections, while 32% oppose it. The survey also found that 24% of Britons would consider using weight-loss injections if they were available on the NHS, compared to 7% who would pay privately. The public remains divided on this issue, reflecting ongoing debates about the trade-offs between the immediate cost of this service and the potential for a healthier population.
6. <https://www.joinlevity.co.uk/posts/weight-loss-injections-nhs> - As of December 2024, weight-loss injections, including semaglutide (Wegovy) and liraglutide (Saxenda), are available on the NHS for eligible patients. To access these treatments, individuals must meet specific criteria, such as having a BMI over 35 with relevant health conditions or a BMI over 50. A referral to a specialist weight management program is required. The NHS plans to begin rolling out tirzepatide (Mounjaro) from early 2025, starting with those who have the highest clinical need, with a phased approach over 12 years to reach all eligible patients.
7. <https://www.gbnews.com/health/obesity-treatment-nhs-hospitals-quadruples> - In 2023/24, the number of hospital episodes related to obesity treatment in NHS hospitals quadrupled, with 1.9 million cases recorded. Despite this increase, the NHS announced plans to limit access to weight-loss injections to just 220,000 people over the next three years, despite an estimated 3.4 million qualifying patients. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) explained that the decision was made 'to protect other vital NHS services.' The restricted rollout is expected to cost the NHS around £320 million annually by its third year.