# UK's NHS Introduces Weight Loss Injections for Obesity Treatment



As of May 14, 2024, the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK is offering weight loss injections, including Wegovy and Saxenda, under prescription accompanied by a regimen of a reduced-calorie diet, increased physical activity, and behavioral support. These injections have shown to enable weight loss exceeding 10% of body weight within a year. Drugs like Wegovy are also being studied for additional health benefits, such as reducing the risk of heart attacks, strokes, or heart failure in obese individuals.

Ozempic, another drug with similar appetite-suppressing effects, is reserved for type 2 diabetes patients and is not licensed for weight loss in the UK or the US. However, it is sometimes used off-label for this purpose. Medical experts emphasize the importance of understanding the potential side effects, such as gastrointestinal issues, before using it for weight loss.

These weight loss injections function as GLP-1 analogues, mimicking a naturally occurring hormone released by the intestines that promotes a feeling of fullness by slowing gastric emptying and stimulating insulin release. Dr. Babak Ashrafi from Superdrug Online Doctor highlighted that they are particularly recommended for individuals who have not sufficiently benefited from diet and exercise alone.

According to guidance from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), the injections, such as Wegovy (semaglutide), are recommended for those with a body mass index (BMI) of 35 or higher, and those with a BMI of 30 may also be eligible under certain conditions. The typical course for these injections can be up to two years, with significant weight loss generally observable within the first six months.

Users of semaglutide reported an average weight reduction of 12% after 68 weeks. While the injections have proven effective, side effects linked to gut activity such as nausea and constipation have been noted, though these may decrease over time.

This development in healthcare was welcomed by some like Professor Alex Miras from Ulster University, who described it as a significant advancement for treating obesity. However, concerns about promoting a healthy lifestyle balance were voiced by organisations like the eating disorder charity Beat and medical professionals including Dr. Stephen Lawrence from the University of Warwick.