# Impact of GLP-1 medications and the gluten-free market on nutrition



The diet industry has experienced significant changes in recent years, particularly with the introduction of GLP-1 medications like Ozempic and Wegovy. These drugs, classified as GLP-1 agonists, were initially designed to assist individuals with type 2 diabetes in managing their blood sugar levels. However, their appetite-suppressing qualities have drawn the attention of those seeking weight loss for both health and aesthetic reasons.

Despite the potential benefits of GLP-1 medications, users should be cognisant of possible side effects, which may include hair loss, fatigue, dehydration, gastrointestinal issues, and headaches. Lynsey Vaughan, an Associate Nutritionist at Higher Nature, has emphasised the importance of maintaining a nutrient-rich diet to mitigate these risks.

Vaughan recommends incorporating Omega-3 fatty acids into daily meals, noting that approximately 75% of the UK population does not consume adequate quantities of these essential fats. "This could be even more prevalent with GLP-1 users due to their effects on appetite,” Vaughan explained. Omega-3s are known to play a crucial role in regulating inflammation and supporting brain health. Low levels of Omega-3 fatty acids can contribute to an increased risk of mood disorders.

Furthermore, the expert suggests that GLP-1 users should focus on enhancing their gut health through the intake of probiotics and prebiotics. "GLP-1s can have gastrointestinal side effects due to the slowing down of the digestive system," Vaughan stated. She stresses the importance of increasing dietary fibre intake to alleviate common issues such as constipation and nausea which may arise from the use of these medications.

Multivitamins are also recommended as a useful dietary supplement, particularly as GLP-1 medications can significantly reduce appetite, leading to potential nutrient deficiencies. Vaughan remarked, "A multivitamin is a great way to help bridge potential nutrient gaps resulting from this reduced appetite and keep you thriving by supporting your energy, immunity, brain, skin and hair."

Moreover, protein intake is highlighted as essential for maintaining muscle mass during weight loss. Vaughan pointed out, "Proteins are essential for every single process in the body which mean low levels can result in widespread issues including poor energy, dull skin, fragile or thinning hair." Collagen, being a vital structural protein, supports various bodily functions and has been shown to aid skin elasticity and overall muscle retention.

In another study, published in the journal Plant Foods for Human Nutrition, research findings have revealed that gluten-free products frequently come at a premium price and often lack the nutritional benefits associated with gluten-containing alternatives. The study asserts that gluten-free items typically provide less protein while containing higher levels of sugar and calories. These findings have sparked debate about the perceived advantages of gluten-free products, especially as many individuals adopt gluten-free diets without medical necessity.

The study highlights that gluten-free products tend to be deficient in dietary fibre, protein, and other essential nutrients, while manufacturers often attempt to compensate for these deficiencies by adding supplements. However, the incorporation of dietary fibres can interfere with protein digestion, leading to further nutritional concerns. On average, gluten-free products reported higher sugar levels, which may contribute to an increase in body mass index (BMI) and potential nutritional deficiencies over time.

The gluten-free market has seen considerable growth, with forecasts indicating a rise from a valuation of $7.28 billion in 2024 to an estimated $13.81 billion by 2032. It was noted that approximately 25% of the U.S. population consumes gluten-free products, which is significantly higher than the roughly 6% who suffer from non-celiac wheat sensitivity.

Looking forward, researchers argue for increased investment in developing more nutritionally balanced gluten-free alternatives. There are calls for collaborative efforts among governments to help secure subsidies that lower production costs, making these items more accessible. Educating the public about both the advantages and disadvantages of gluten-free diets is deemed essential, as many individuals continue to adopt these diets without a clear understanding of their actual health benefits.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.uchicagomedicine.org/forefront/research-and-discoveries-articles/2024/may/research-on-glp-1-drugs> - This article supports the claim that GLP-1 medications like Ozempic and Wegovy are effective for weight management and type 2 diabetes treatment, highlighting their role in controlling blood glucose levels and promoting weight loss.
* <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/type-2-diabetes/expert-answers/byetta/faq-20057955> - This Mayo Clinic article explains how GLP-1 agonists work by mimicking a hormone that helps control blood sugar and curb hunger, which aids in weight loss. It also discusses potential side effects and limitations of these medications.
* <https://medicine.washu.edu/news/study-identifies-benefits-risks-linked-to-popular-weight-loss-drugs/> - This study from Washington University School of Medicine highlights the benefits and risks of GLP-1 medications, including their effects on cognitive and behavioral health, as well as potential side effects like pancreatitis and kidney conditions.
* <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/omega-3-deficiency> - This article explains the importance of Omega-3 fatty acids in regulating inflammation and supporting brain health, which is relevant to maintaining a nutrient-rich diet while using GLP-1 medications.
* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7231118/> - This study discusses the role of probiotics and prebiotics in enhancing gut health, which is crucial for mitigating gastrointestinal side effects associated with GLP-1 medications.
* <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165037822001023> - This article provides insights into the nutritional deficiencies of gluten-free products, highlighting their higher sugar content and lower levels of essential nutrients like dietary fiber and protein.