# Weight-loss injections may halve risk of obesity-linked cancers, study finds



A transformative study has emerged from recent research, suggesting that weight-loss injections could nearly halve the risk of developing cancers associated with obesity. This landmark finding has been described by cancer experts as potentially ushering in a "whole new era of preventive cancer medicine."

Obesity is linked to a staggering 13 different types of cancer, presenting a serious public health challenge. While it is well established that weight loss can mitigate these risks, researchers have concluded that weight-loss injections offer even greater protective benefits beyond just achieving a lower body mass. This was revealed through a study conducted in Israel, involving 6,000 adults without a history of cancer. Participants either underwent bariatric surgery or received glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1RAs), including liraglutide (Saxenda), exenatide (Byetta), or dulaglutide (Trulicity). These medications are designed to replicate the GLP-1 hormone, helping to lower blood sugar levels and induce a prolonged feeling of fullness.

Notably, while those undergoing bariatric surgery experienced a weight loss that was approximately double that of individuals using GLP-1RA medications, the reduction in cancer risk was similarly impressive. The researchers reported that bariatric surgery could decrease cancer risk by 30-42%. Yet, when factoring in the weight loss associated with each intervention, GLP-1RAs were found to be more effective than anticipated in preventing obesity-related cancers.

Prof Dror Dicker, co-lead author from Hasharon Hospital, Rabin Medical Center, noted that the protective effects of these medications likely stem from multiple mechanisms, including a reduction in inflammation—an established contributor to cancer development. He expressed optimism for the future, suggesting that newer, highly potent GLP-1RAs with superior weight-loss efficacy might offer even greater protective effects against obesity-related cancers, although further research will be essential to ensure that these drugs do not inadvertently increase the risk of other cancers.

A parallel study presented at the European Congress on Obesity compared two leading weight-loss injections, Mounjaro and Wegovy. This research demonstrated that patients using Mounjaro achieved a significantly higher percentage of weight loss—20.2% compared to 13.7% for those on Wegovy—adding an intriguing layer to the ongoing conversation about the efficacy of these treatments.

Prof Mark Lawler, from Queen’s University Belfast, commented on the implications of the findings. He acknowledged the observational nature of the study but emphasised the exciting potential of GLP-1RAs. He remarked, "These data suggest target GLP-1s may cut that risk by nearly 50%—an approach that would be transformational in preventing obesity-related cancer." He further pointed out the biological rationale for this, noting that reducing inflammation aligns with strategies for cancer prevention.

There is also a pressing need to explore the utility of these medications beyond prevention. Prof Jason Halford, a former president of the European Association for the Study of Obesity, highlighted the importance of studying these drugs in patients recently diagnosed with cancer, noting that managing weight effectively could have significant ramifications for patient outcomes. As he stated, "This could be a new dawn," emphasising the critical role of weight management in cancer care.

In light of these promising developments, a collective of 54 international experts issued a statement calling for urgent clinical trials of weight-loss drugs as preventive measures against cancer. Accordingly, a team of researchers based in Manchester, funded by Cancer Research UK, is preparing to launch a large-scale clinical trial involving tens of thousands of participants. Dr Matthew Harris from the Manchester Cancer Research Centre expressed enthusiasm, affirming that weight-loss jabs offer an unprecedented opportunity for effective population-scale intervention in tackling obesity.

The intricate connections between obesity, weight management, and cancer risk are becoming ever clearer, reflecting an urgent need for further research and clinical trials that could define the future of cancer prevention strategies.

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## Bibliography

* <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/11/weight-loss-jabs-could-halve-risk-of-obesity-related-cancers-study-finds> - Please view link - unable to able to access data