# Police arrest three after woman hospitalised by counterfeit weight-loss jab



A recent incident involving a woman suffering severe health complications after receiving a weight-loss injection has highlighted the alarming risks associated with counterfeit medication in the UK. The woman, who used a so-called “weight loss jab” sourced from an unregulated salon, experienced internal injuries and required hospitalization. Fortunately, she has since been discharged, but the episode has drawn significant attention to the dangers of purchasing such products from unofficial channels. In response, North Yorkshire Police arrested three women in connection with the case—two in their thirties on suspicion of administering a harmful substance, and a third in her fifties for allegedly supplying a prescription-only medicine.

Surgeons and healthcare authorities are becoming increasingly worried as the popularity of weight-loss injections, such as Ozempic and Saxenda, surges amid a burgeoning market. The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has previously issued warnings regarding counterfeit medication pens being sold online. These fake products have been linked to severe health risks, including hypoglycemic shock and even coma. The MHRA reported seizing 369 potentially counterfeit Ozempic pens in just 2023, alongside numerous reports of fraudulent Saxenda pens procured through illegitimate means. The agency urges the public to avoid these risky purchases and to seek legitimate prescriptions from healthcare professionals instead.

As obesity rates rise, with an estimated 500,000 individuals in the UK currently using prescription weight-loss drugs, the market is rapidly expanding, projected to be valued at £85 billion by 2030. Accordingly, the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) has tightened regulations for online pharmacies dispensing these medications. Under new guidelines, healthcare providers must now independently verify a patient’s height, weight, and body mass index—a move aimed at curbing irregular prescribing practices that have proliferated in the face of increasing demand.

Despite the effectiveness of these treatments, significant concerns remain regarding safety and potential side effects. NHS England’s national medical director, Professor Sir Stephen Powis, has emphasised that these potent medications should only be prescribed rigorously for medically indicated conditions such as obesity or diabetes—not as quick fixes for weight loss. Medical professionals, including Laura Angus, the Chief Pharmacy Officer for NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, have reiterated the importance of acquiring medications from legitimate pharmacies to mitigate serious health risks.

Councillor Michael Harrison, North Yorkshire Council’s executive member for health, advised those on weight-loss journeys to pursue safe, regulated methods, highlighting the availability of various free NHS resources designed to support healthier lifestyle choices. He encouraged individuals to engage with platforms like the NHS Better Health website and programmes such as Active North Yorkshire, which offer comprehensive tools for managing weight, nutrition, and physical activity effectively.

As the prevalence of counterfeit weight-loss medications continues to rise, awareness of their associated risks is critical. Potential users are advised to report any adverse reactions and consult healthcare professionals for safer alternatives. Such diligence will help safeguard public health amid a backdrop of increasing regulation and ongoing concerns about the integrity of weight-loss drugs available in the UK.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/weight-loss-jab-injection-warning-b2757434.html), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/oct/26/uk-public-warned-over-dangers-of-fake-weight-loss-medication-pens)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/oct/26/uk-public-warned-over-dangers-of-fake-weight-loss-medication-pens), [[3]](https://www.itv.com/news/2023-10-27/uk-issues-warning-against-ozempic-weight-loss-pens-following-hospitalisations)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/uk-pharmacies-regulator-tightens-rules-prescribing-obesity-drugs-2025-02-04/), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/b9892513-636b-418e-b8d5-bc2df30bb41b)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/b9892513-636b-418e-b8d5-bc2df30bb41b), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/oct/26/uk-public-warned-over-dangers-of-fake-weight-loss-medication-pens)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/oct/26/uk-public-warned-over-dangers-of-fake-weight-loss-medication-pens), [[7]](https://www.itv.com/news/2023-10-27/uk-issues-warning-against-ozempic-weight-loss-pens-following-hospitalisations)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/weight-loss-jab-injection-warning-b2757434.html), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/oct/26/uk-public-warned-over-dangers-of-fake-weight-loss-medication-pens), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/oct/26/uk-public-warned-over-dangers-of-fake-weight-loss-medication-pens)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/weight-loss-jab-injection-warning-b2757434.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/oct/26/uk-public-warned-over-dangers-of-fake-weight-loss-medication-pens> - The UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has issued a warning about counterfeit weight-loss medication pens, such as Ozempic and Saxenda, being sold online. These fake products have been linked to serious health risks, including hypoglycemic shock and coma. The MHRA advises the public to avoid purchasing these medications from unregulated sources and to consult healthcare professionals for legitimate prescriptions. Since January 2023, the MHRA has seized 369 potentially counterfeit Ozempic pens and received reports of fake Saxenda pens obtained through non-legitimate channels. The agency emphasizes the dangers of buying prescription-only medicines online without a valid prescription, as they may not meet safety standards and could pose significant health risks. Individuals who have purchased these counterfeit products are urged to report them to the MHRA for investigation and appropriate action.
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/2023-10-27/uk-issues-warning-against-ozempic-weight-loss-pens-following-hospitalisations> - The UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has issued a warning against the purchase of counterfeit weight-loss pens, specifically Ozempic, following a series of hospitalizations across Europe. These counterfeit pens, which claim to contain semaglutide, are believed to contain insulin, leading to serious side effects such as hypoglycemic shock and coma. The MHRA has seized 369 potentially fake Ozempic pens since January 2023 and received reports of fake Saxenda pens obtained through non-legitimate routes. The agency advises the public to avoid buying these medications online without a valid prescription and to consult healthcare professionals for legitimate prescriptions. The MHRA emphasizes the risks associated with purchasing prescription-only medicines from unregulated sources, as they may not meet safety standards and could pose significant health risks.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/uk-pharmacies-regulator-tightens-rules-prescribing-obesity-drugs-2025-02-04/> - Britain's pharmacies regulator, the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC), has tightened rules for online pharmacies prescribing obesity drugs to prevent potential harm to patients. The GPhC updated its guidance for the first time in three years due to concerns about the dispensing of weight-loss medications. It has added the GLP-1 receptor agonist drug class, including Wegovy and Mounjaro, to its list of 'high-risk medicines' that require pharmacies to use extra measures when prescribing. Online pharmacies must now independently verify a patient's weight, height, and body mass index before prescribing weight-loss drugs, and online questionnaires or phone calls will no longer suffice. The stricter guidelines come in response to a surge in the private market for obesity drugs in the UK, with an estimated 500,000 people using them, often with concerning dispensing practices. The GPhC has taken enforcement action against several online pharmacies for their handling of weight-loss medications.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/b9892513-636b-418e-b8d5-bc2df30bb41b> - The use of weight-loss injections such as Mounjaro and Wegovy has seen a significant rise in the UK, with 500,000 users reported, contributing to booming sales. Novo Nordisk, maker of Wegovy, experienced over a 50% increase in sales of obesity drugs in the past year. Globally, the market for these drugs, valued at £5bn in 2023, is expected to grow 15-fold to £85bn by 2030. These drugs are effective in weight reduction and treating conditions like heart disease. However, the General Pharmaceutical Council has introduced new regulations requiring height, weight, and BMI verification by healthcare providers to mitigate online prescription misuse. Despite proven benefits, NHS England’s national medical director, Professor Sir Stephen Powis, cautions that these potent medications have potential side effects and should only be prescribed for obesity or diabetes, not as a quick fix.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/oct/26/uk-public-warned-over-dangers-of-fake-weight-loss-medication-pens> - The UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has issued a warning about counterfeit weight-loss medication pens, such as Ozempic and Saxenda, being sold online. These fake products have been linked to serious health risks, including hypoglycemic shock and coma. The MHRA advises the public to avoid purchasing these medications from unregulated sources and to consult healthcare professionals for legitimate prescriptions. Since January 2023, the MHRA has seized 369 potentially counterfeit Ozempic pens and received reports of fake Saxenda pens obtained through non-legitimate channels. The agency emphasizes the dangers of buying prescription-only medicines online without a valid prescription, as they may not meet safety standards and could pose significant health risks. Individuals who have purchased these counterfeit products are urged to report them to the MHRA for investigation and appropriate action.
7. <https://www.itv.com/news/2023-10-27/uk-issues-warning-against-ozempic-weight-loss-pens-following-hospitalisations> - The UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has issued a warning against the purchase of counterfeit weight-loss pens, specifically Ozempic, following a series of hospitalizations across Europe. These counterfeit pens, which claim to contain semaglutide, are believed to contain insulin, leading to serious side effects such as hypoglycemic shock and coma. The MHRA has seized 369 potentially fake Ozempic pens since January 2023 and received reports of fake Saxenda pens obtained through non-legitimate routes. The agency advises the public to avoid buying these medications online without a valid prescription and to consult healthcare professionals for legitimate prescriptions. The MHRA emphasizes the risks associated with purchasing prescription-only medicines from unregulated sources, as they may not meet safety standards and could pose significant health risks.