# Ozempic chic signals a worrying comeback of ultra-thin ideals and diet culture



The moment Ashley Graham was chosen as the cover girl for the 2016 Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue marked a significant milestone in celebrating body diversity. Graham, a plus-size model, described the event as "beyond epic," with editors claiming it would "make history." Fast forward nearly a decade, and the initial hopes of the body positivity movement appear to be fading, overtaken by a resurgence of ultra-thin ideals. This cultural shift can be encapsulated in the term "Ozempic chic," a phrase that highlights the growing influence of weight-loss drugs like Ozempic—originally developed to treat Type 2 diabetes but now frequently used off-label for weight reduction.

The rise of Ozempic reflects a broader societal trend whereby the pursuit of extreme thinness has become increasingly embedded in popular culture, particularly among influencers on platforms such as TikTok. One notable figure in this realm is Liv Schmidt, whose diet tips and lifestyle advice have amassed a following that celebrates restrictive eating habits. Schmidt’s community, dubbed 'Skinnytok,' is a troubling manifestation of this trend, prompting discussions about the glorification of disordered eating. Health professional Abbey Sharp, who runs the podcast Bite Back, expressed concerns that "Skinnytok glamorizes and normalizes disordered eating and body dysmorphia."

Schmidt's content, which often includes shocking advice such as consuming just three bites of food for satisfaction, has sparked outrage among health experts. Critics, including Mallary Tenore Tarpley from the University of Texas at Austin, argue that such messaging not only promotes unhealthy weight loss strategies but also fosters damaging behaviours. The content has proven particularly alluring due to its hyper-restrictive nature, appealing to a generation grappling with societal pressures around body image.

The popularity of weight-loss drugs has further complicated these narratives. Ozempic and its alternatives are incredibly effective, leading to significant financial success for manufacturers like Novo Nordisk. The company reported soaring demand for the drug but has also become embroiled in controversy due to shortages impacting individuals who rely on it for medical reasons. As the allure of rapid weight loss grows, many users are hesitant to discuss their drug use, citing societal stigma around perceived 'easy fixes' for weight management.

This complicated relationship between health, aesthetics, and morality within the fashion and beauty industries has intensified scrutiny. A recent size inclusivity report revealed a stark decline in the representation of mid-size and plus-size models on runway shows, mirroring broader societal trends that favour extremely thin physiques. While the past decade saw fleeting progress towards body diversity, the current landscape appears to revert to its former ideals. Vogue Business reported only two percent of models seen at major fashion shows were mid-size, suggesting that the industry is turning its back on the values it briefly espoused.

Notably, numerous celebrities, long held aloft as champions for body positivity, have openly admitted to turning to these weight-loss drugs. Figures like Rebel Wilson, Oprah Winfrey, and Meghan Trainor have used Ozempic or its close substitutes to achieve their slender figures. This departure from the embrace of diverse body types raises crucial questions about how we define health, success, and beauty in modern society. The pressure to conform remains extraordinarily potent, as the allure of thinness continues to overshadow the self-acceptance movement that gained traction in the mid-2010s.

Experts observe that the present fixation on weight-loss medications is the latest iteration in a long-standing pattern of diet culture that refuses to dissolve entirely. Sharp argues that wellness culture, which previously masked itself in the language of self-care and clean eating, has evolved into a new paradigm in which weight-loss drugs are normalised. "The second trigger was weight loss drugs like Ozempic and the commodification of thinness," she notes, highlighting how buying a thinner body threatens those who have toiled under the belief that thinness must be earned.

Amidst these troubling dynamics, parenting experts advocate for much-needed discussions about body image and eating habits. As Tarpley advises, it's critical to have open dialogues with our children about these subjects to avert potential dangers associated with unrealistic body expectations. The ultimate goal should not necessitate an overarching pressure to love one’s body but to cultivate a sense of body neutrality—recognising our bodies for their functionality rather than aesthetics.

In a world still grappling with the intense cultural legacies of dieting, it is crucial to challenge the harmful messaging proliferating online and to strive for healthier dialogues around body image, making way for an inclusive definition of beauty that genuinely celebrates all bodies.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-14751455/Ozempic-chic-women-dieting-weight-loss.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/498c2c5e-fb9c-461e-8e9c-5429696b56a6)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-14751455/Ozempic-chic-women-dieting-weight-loss.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://time.com/6259572/ozempic-eating-disorders/), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/378a1177-afed-4ecb-9d70-92ed396fdd88)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://time.com/6966957/ozempic-eating-disorders-essay/), [[6]](https://www.axios.com/local/miami/2022/11/16/ozempic-shortage-semaglutide-weight-loss-miami)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/378a1177-afed-4ecb-9d70-92ed396fdd88), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/498c2c5e-fb9c-461e-8e9c-5429696b56a6)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://time.com/6259572/ozempic-eating-disorders/), [[5]](https://time.com/6966957/ozempic-eating-disorders-essay/)
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* Paragraph 7 – [[3]](https://time.com/6259572/ozempic-eating-disorders/), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/378a1177-afed-4ecb-9d70-92ed396fdd88)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-14751455/Ozempic-chic-women-dieting-weight-loss.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/498c2c5e-fb9c-461e-8e9c-5429696b56a6> - The fashion industry has seen significant physical transformations among its members due to the widespread use of weight-loss drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy. Ozempic, initially for diabetics, has become popular for achieving thinness quickly, which aligns with the industry's longstanding veneration of slim physiques. Despite its prevalence and effectiveness, many users are reluctant to openly discuss their use due to societal stigmas around weight loss. The manufacturer, Novo Nordisk, has seen substantial financial success with this drug, but its high costs and global supply issues have sparked concerns and debates. There is also a lack of long-term studies on its effects, and some users may regain the weight without lifestyle changes. The industry's tendency to secretly or indirectly address drug use highlights persistent cultural biases against easy weight loss and the notion that thinness must be earned through traditional means. This trend contrasts with recent calls for greater body diversity, reflecting ongoing tensions in societal attitudes towards weight and health.
3. <https://time.com/6259572/ozempic-eating-disorders/> - The increasing popularity of Ozempic, a diabetes drug that is being prescribed off-label for weight loss, is causing concern among people with eating disorders and health professionals. Media portrayals of thinness and extreme diets have previously contributed to eating disorders, and continuous coverage of Ozempic is potentially triggering for those in recovery. Jessica Setnick, a dietitian, and Jessica Saunders, a psychology professor, note that such coverage normalizes unhealthy weight loss and may lead to disordered eating. Although intended to control blood sugar in Type 2 diabetes patients, Ozempic suppresses appetite and carries risks like nausea, constipation, and even thyroid cancer. Despite the dangers and lack of approval for weight loss by the FDA, its off-label use for cosmetic purposes is rising, causing a shortage for diabetes patients. Experts advise those triggered by such content to mute or avoid it and to seek support through therapeutic strategies and professional help.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/378a1177-afed-4ecb-9d70-92ed396fdd88> - In a podcast episode of 'Life and Art from FT Weekend,' Lilah Raptopoulos discusses the fashion industry's obsession with the weight-loss drug Ozempic with her colleague Jo Ellison. Ellison, with extensive fashion industry experience, observes a notable trend of colleagues becoming thinner, suspecting many are secretly using Ozempic or Wegovy, drugs originally intended for diabetes and obesity control, now used to lose weight. The conversation delves into the complexities and problematic nature of associating thinness with positive moral attributes and how the fashion industry's preference for extremely thin models contradicts recent movements towards body inclusivity. They discuss the cultural implications of Ozempic, including its association with privilege, and the potential long-term health effects of the drug. The episode reflects on personal and societal pressures regarding weight and body image and highlights the contradiction between body positivity and the increasing use of cosmetic enhancements.
5. <https://time.com/6966957/ozempic-eating-disorders-essay/> - Ozempic, a drug primarily used to treat type 2 diabetes, has gained widespread popularity for its off-label use in weight loss, raising concerns among eating disorder experts. The drug mimics the GLP-1 hormone, curbing appetite and potentially triggering harmful effects in individuals with eating disorders like binge eating disorder (BED) or bulimia nervosa (BN). Experts warn that prescribing such drugs for eating disorder patients, even with well-meaning intentions, can worsen their conditions and could lead to more severe disorders such as anorexia. The underlying issues of trauma, anxiety, and cultural pressures related to body image remain unaddressed by these treatments. Additionally, these drugs, intended for long-term use, fail to equip patients with the necessary psychological and behavioral tools to manage their disorders. The rising trend in using these drugs reflects a broader misconception about eating disorders and health, potentially exacerbating the problem rather than resolving it.
6. <https://www.axios.com/local/miami/2022/11/16/ozempic-shortage-semaglutide-weight-loss-miami> - A surge in demand for the diabetes medication Ozempic, fueled by its weight loss effects popularized by celebrities and TikTok, has led to shortages in Miami, impacting patients with Type 2 diabetes who rely on it. Ozempic, or semaglutide, was approved by the FDA in 2017 and helps manage blood sugar levels. Off-label use for weight loss is diverting supply from those in medical need, according to Dr. Jonathan Fialkow of Baptist Health's Miami Cardiac and Vascular Institute. The shortage reflects a broader trend, as a 2019 study predicts nearly half of American adults could be obese by 2030.