# NHS restricts initial Mounjaro access despite soaring weight loss prescription surge



The use of weight management drugs in the UK has seen a significant surge, particularly with the recent rise in prescriptions for popular medications like Ozempic, Mounjaro, and Wegovy. According to reports, nearly three million prescriptions were issued in England last year, sharply increasing from 1.4 million in 2022-2023 to approximately 2.7 million last year. This trend highlights a growing reliance on these medications as both weight loss aids and treatments for type 2 diabetes. Mounjaro, in particular, has emerged as a leading contender in this category, earning the nickname "King Kong" of weight loss injections due to its considerable efficacy and rising popularity.

The increased usage of Mounjaro, or tirzepatide, has not only boosted prescription numbers but also resulted in a dramatic rise in expenditure—£269 million spent by the NHS on these jabs last year alone, reflecting an overall increase in spending of £93.1 million across various dosages. Most of the prescribed medications have gone to patients diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, yet a notable number are also accessing these drugs through private prescriptions. This suggests a broader acceptance and implementation of pharmacological interventions in managing weight and related health issues.

In November 2023, the UK’s Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) officially authorised the use of Mounjaro for weight management, conditional upon a patient’s body mass index (BMI) and associated weight-related health concerns. Specifically, this approval targets adults with a BMI of 30 or more (indicating obesity) or those with a BMI ranging from 27 to 30 who also suffer from conditions like prediabetes or high cholesterol. Mounjaro works by modulating appetite, effectively helping users feel satiated while minimising cravings. The medicine is administered through weekly injections and is intended to be coupled with a balanced diet and increased physical activity.

Building on the MHRA's endorsement, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in June 2024 recommended Mounjaro for broader use in treating obesity, particularly in individuals with a BMI of 35 or higher who also face additional health risks. Clinical research indicates that Mounjaro can enable users to lose nearly 22.5% of their body weight over a 72-week period, outpacing the results associated with semaglutide (Wegovy), which typically produces a 16% weight loss.

Despite these encouraging developments, new hurdles have arisen. In December 2024, the NHS announced a phased rollout for Mounjaro, initially limiting access to around 220,000 patients in England. This cautious strategy aims to avoid overwhelming healthcare resources while ensuring a systematic and equitable distribution of the drug to those with the greatest clinical need. The phased approach has drawn criticism from patient advocacy groups, who express concern over the prolonged wait times and the urgency of addressing obesity-related health issues.

As the landscape of weight management medications evolves, Mounjaro represents a pivotal addition to treatment options, promising not only to reshape individual health outcomes but also to alleviate some of the systemic pressures faced by the NHS. The ongoing monitoring of its effects and access will be vital in ensuring its success in the UK healthcare system.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2066092/NHS-weight-loss-jabs-mounjaro), [[5]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mhra-authorises-diabetes-drug-mounjaro-tirzepatide-for-weight-management-and-weight-loss)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2066092/NHS-weight-loss-jabs-mounjaro), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mhra-authorises-diabetes-drug-mounjaro-tirzepatide-for-weight-management-and-weight-loss)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mhra-authorises-diabetes-drug-mounjaro-tirzepatide-for-weight-management-and-weight-loss), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/jun/04/mounjaro-is-second-obesity-drug-to-be-approved-for-use-in-england)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/dec/05/nhs-to-restrict-new-weight-loss-drug-mounjaro-to-220000-patients-in-england-initially), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mhra-authorises-diabetes-drug-mounjaro-tirzepatide-for-weight-management-and-weight-loss)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2066092/NHS-weight-loss-jabs-mounjaro> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mhra-authorises-diabetes-drug-mounjaro-tirzepatide-for-weight-management-and-weight-loss> - In November 2023, the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) authorised Mounjaro (tirzepatide) for weight management and weight loss in adults aged 18 and over. The drug is approved for individuals with a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or more (obesity) and those with a BMI between 27 and 30 (overweight) who have weight-related health issues such as prediabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or heart problems. Mounjaro is intended to be used alongside a reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity. The medication works by regulating appetite, helping individuals feel full and reducing hunger and food cravings. It is administered as a weekly injection, with doses ranging from 2.5mg to 15mg. Common side effects include nausea, diarrhoea, vomiting, and constipation. The MHRA will continue to monitor the safety and effectiveness of Mounjaro. Patients are encouraged to report any side effects to the Yellow Card scheme.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/jun/04/mounjaro-is-second-obesity-drug-to-be-approved-for-use-in-england> - In June 2024, the UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) approved Mounjaro (tirzepatide) as a treatment for obesity. NICE recommended the drug for individuals with a BMI of 35 or more and at least one weight-related health issue, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, or sleep apnoea. Clinical trials demonstrated that Mounjaro helped users lose 22.5% of their body weight over 72 weeks, compared to 16% with semaglutide (Wegovy). NICE's guidance allows general practitioners to prescribe Mounjaro, potentially increasing its accessibility compared to Wegovy, which is typically prescribed through specialist weight management services. The approval of Mounjaro provides an additional option for managing obesity in England, offering a more effective alternative to existing treatments.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/dec/05/nhs-to-restrict-new-weight-loss-drug-mounjaro-to-220000-patients-in-england-initially> - In December 2024, the NHS announced a phased rollout of Mounjaro (tirzepatide) for weight loss, initially limiting access to approximately 220,000 patients in England. The decision was made to prevent overwhelming NHS services, with a gradual expansion over 12 years. NICE recommended Mounjaro for individuals with a BMI over 35 and at least one weight-related health issue. The phased approach aims to manage demand and ensure the safe and effective delivery of the drug to those with the highest clinical need. Patient groups expressed disappointment over the extended wait times, highlighting the urgency of addressing obesity-related health concerns.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mhra-authorises-diabetes-drug-mounjaro-tirzepatide-for-weight-management-and-weight-loss> - In November 2023, the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) authorised Mounjaro (tirzepatide) for weight management and weight loss in adults aged 18 and over. The drug is approved for individuals with a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or more (obesity) and those with a BMI between 27 and 30 (overweight) who have weight-related health issues such as prediabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or heart problems. Mounjaro is intended to be used alongside a reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity. The medication works by regulating appetite, helping individuals feel full and reducing hunger and food cravings. It is administered as a weekly injection, with doses ranging from 2.5mg to 15mg. Common side effects include nausea, diarrhoea, vomiting, and constipation. The MHRA will continue to monitor the safety and effectiveness of Mounjaro. Patients are encouraged to report any side effects to the Yellow Card scheme.
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