# Weight-loss injections like Mounjaro revolutionise UK obesity treatment amid safety concerns and counterfeit risks



Weight-loss injections such as Mounjaro (tirzepatide) have rapidly transformed obesity treatment options in the UK, profoundly impacting patients’ lives in ways that extend well beyond simple weight reduction. While these GLP-1 agonist drugs have been hailed for their effectiveness, patient experiences uncover a complex picture of benefit, risk, and unexpected health improvements.

Michelle Giles, a 42-year-old behaviour support assistant from Sutton, Greater London, credits Mounjaro with saving her son’s life. After being deemed too overweight for kidney donation surgery at 110kg and size 20, she lost approximately 30kg following the injections—enough to qualify for the operation. Her son Leo, who was born with only one kidney and faced severe chronic kidney disease with only 5% function remaining, received her donated kidney in April and has since regained normal kidney function. Michelle’s story highlights an important role these medications can play in preparing patients for critical surgeries where weight thresholds pose significant risks. Simon Davies, emeritus professor of nephrology and a trustee of Kidney Research UK, emphasised that losing weight before surgery can reduce complications related to anaesthesia, blood clots, and long-term kidney health for donors, making such treatments a “win for both sides.”

However, the benefits come with potential side effects and complications. Julie Bishop, 55, from North Tyneside, shared her experience of developing severe pancreatitis shortly after starting Mounjaro, leading to hospital admissions and ongoing digestive issues. Pancreatitis is recognised as a rare but serious side effect of GLP-1 agonists, which experts explain may occur due to gallstone formation and blockage of the pancreatic duct. Christian Macutkiewicz, a consultant surgeon, noted that while many pancreatitis cases linked to these drugs are mild, the condition can escalate to a life-threatening stage, underscoring the need for careful monitoring. Official medical sources list nausea, diarrhoea, and abdominal pain among common side effects, with more serious reactions such as pancreatitis being less frequent but critical to identify early.

Contrasting these challenges, other accounts suggest broader health benefits beyond weight loss. Michelle Holmes, 57, a training consultant from Durham, experienced a marked improvement in her asthma after starting Mounjaro—an unexpected but welcome outcome that even her asthma nurse described as “amazing.” Dr Andrew Whittamore, a GP and clinical lead for the charity Asthma and Lung UK, explained that the anti-inflammatory effects of GLP-1 agonists may reduce asthma symptoms independent of weight loss, though the exact mechanism remains unclear. This finding adds nuance to the conversation around these drugs, indicating potential advantages in managing inflammatory conditions alongside obesity.

Another patient, Lisa Bell, 58, from County Durham, found that Mounjaro enabled her to lose 4st in six months, which was essential to qualify for a needed hysterectomy due to cysts in her womb. Consultant bariatric surgeon Zaher Toumi highlighted that weight loss before surgery improves technical feasibility and lowers risks such as infections and blood clots, making access to surgery possible for many patients. Lisa’s experience, alongside Michelle Giles’s, reflects how weight-loss medications can be pivotal in preparing patients for critical medical interventions that would otherwise be too risky.

On a broader scale, the European Association for the Study of Obesity has recommended GLP-1 agonists like Mounjaro and Novo Nordisk’s semaglutide be considered first-line treatments for obesity, given their significant efficacy and benefits for coexisting conditions like heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and fatty liver disease. These non-binding guidelines underscore the transformative potential of such drugs in weight management while acknowledging concerns related to cost, side effects, and the need for lifestyle modifications to sustain long-term benefits.

Nevertheless, the proliferation of weight-loss injections has also led to challenges with drug safety and authenticity. Pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly, maker of Mounjaro, recently uncovered counterfeit versions of tirzepatide—some contaminated with bacteria or composed of ineffective substances—circulating in unregulated clinics and compounding pharmacies. This discovery has prompted legal action to protect patients from unsafe products, highlighting the risks of poor regulation amidst soaring demand. Novo Nordisk faced similar issues with counterfeit semaglutide products, raising concerns about the integrity of weight-loss medications in grey markets.

Regulatory developments are underway as well. The FDA approved a new formulation of tirzepatide branded as Zepbound for weight loss in the US, demonstrating potential to help users lose between 40 to 60 pounds. However, around 10% of trial participants discontinued due to gastrointestinal side effects, and estimated monthly costs near $1,000 may limit accessibility, a situation likely to reflect challenges faced internationally.

In summary, weight-loss jabs such as Mounjaro offer promising avenues for tackling obesity and associated health conditions, as vividly illustrated by the personal stories of patients regaining quality of life and medical eligibility. Yet, these benefits are tempered by risks including serious side effects and the circulation of counterfeit products. Ongoing research, careful medical supervision, and regulatory vigilance remain essential to maximise the life-changing potential of these treatments while safeguarding patient safety.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15170461/Weve-lost-FOURTEEN-stone-weight-loss-jabs-changed-lives-ways-youd-NEVER-expect-life-threatening-effects-miracle-health-transformations-four-women-reveal-warts-verdicts.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.webmd.com/obesity/mounjaro-side-effects), [[5]](https://www.pritikin.com/your-health/health-benefits/healthy-weight-loss/weight-loss-medications/mounjaro-weight-loss-guide.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15170461/Weve-lost-FOURTEEN-stone-weight-loss-jabs-changed-lives-ways-youd-NEVER-expect-life-threatening-effects-miracle-health-transformations-four-women-reveal-warts-verdicts.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.webmd.com/obesity/mounjaro-side-effects), [[5]](https://www.pritikin.com/your-health/health-benefits/healthy-weight-loss/weight-loss-medications/mounjaro-weight-loss-guide.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15170461/Weve-lost-FOURTEEN-stone-weight-loss-jabs-changed-lives-ways-youd-NEVER-expect-life-threatening-effects-miracle-health-transformations-four-women-reveal-warts-verdicts.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.webmd.com/obesity/mounjaro-side-effects), [[5]](https://www.pritikin.com/your-health/health-benefits/healthy-weight-loss/weight-loss-medications/mounjaro-weight-loss-guide.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15170461/Weve-lost-FOURTEEN-stone-weight-loss-jabs-changed-lives-ways-youd-NEVER-expect-life-threatening-effects-miracle-health-transformations-four-women-reveal-warts-verdicts.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.webmd.com/obesity/mounjaro-side-effects), [[5]](https://www.pritikin.com/your-health/health-benefits/healthy-weight-loss/weight-loss-medications/mounjaro-weight-loss-guide.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15170461/Weve-lost-FOURTEEN-stone-weight-loss-jabs-changed-lives-ways-youd-NEVER-expect-life-threatening-effects-miracle-health-transformations-four-women-reveal-warts-verdicts.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.webmd.com/obesity/mounjaro-side-effects)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/novo-lilly-weight-loss-drugs-should-be-first-option-obesity-treatments-european-2025-10-02/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/lilly-finds-bacteria-other-impurities-mounjaro-zepbound-knockoffs-2024-03-07/)
* Paragraph 8 – [[6]](https://apnews.com/article/9718480e110eace3e91e0a2bcdc5e536)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15170461/Weve-lost-FOURTEEN-stone-weight-loss-jabs-changed-lives-ways-youd-NEVER-expect-life-threatening-effects-miracle-health-transformations-four-women-reveal-warts-verdicts.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/novo-lilly-weight-loss-drugs-should-be-first-option-obesity-treatments-european-2025-10-02/), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/lilly-finds-bacteria-other-impurities-mounjaro-zepbound-knockoffs-2024-03-07/), [[4]](https://www.webmd.com/obesity/mounjaro-side-effects), [[5]](https://www.pritikin.com/your-health/health-benefits/healthy-weight-loss/weight-loss-medications/mounjaro-weight-loss-guide.html), [[6]](https://apnews.com/article/9718480e110eace3e91e0a2bcdc5e536)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15170461/Weve-lost-FOURTEEN-stone-weight-loss-jabs-changed-lives-ways-youd-NEVER-expect-life-threatening-effects-miracle-health-transformations-four-women-reveal-warts-verdicts.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/novo-lilly-weight-loss-drugs-should-be-first-option-obesity-treatments-european-2025-10-02/> - The European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO) has recommended that GLP-1 agonists, such as Novo Nordisk's semaglutide (Wegovy, Ozempic) and Eli Lilly's tirzepatide (Zepbound, Mounjaro), be considered first-line treatments for obesity. These medications have demonstrated significant efficacy in weight reduction and offer benefits for various obesity-related conditions, including heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, obstructive sleep apnea, and fatty liver disease. The guidelines, published in *Nature Medicine*, are based on clinical trial data evaluating both efficacy and safety. While the recommendations are non-binding, they underscore the transformative potential of these drugs in managing obesity and related complications. However, concerns persist regarding costs, side effects, sustainability, and the necessity for complementary lifestyle and nutritional changes. The EASO plans to update these recommendations regularly as new evidence emerges, reflecting the rapid progress in obesity treatment. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/novo-lilly-weight-loss-drugs-should-be-first-option-obesity-treatments-european-2025-10-02/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/lilly-finds-bacteria-other-impurities-mounjaro-zepbound-knockoffs-2024-03-07/> - Eli Lilly has discovered bacterial contamination and high impurity levels in products falsely claiming to be compounded versions of tirzepatide, the active ingredient in its diabetes drug Mounjaro and weight loss treatment Zepbound. These counterfeit products were found in medical spas, weight-loss clinics, and compounding pharmacies, prompting Lilly to sue to halt their distribution. Some of these knockoff products had differing chemical structures or were simply sugar alcohol. Lilly emphasized that it does not distribute tirzepatide to any compounding pharmacies. This issue highlights the challenges in ensuring drug safety outside regulatory frameworks, with the Alliance for Pharmacy Compounding asserting that compounding doesn't inherently mean drugs are unsafe. Similarly, Novo Nordisk has encountered impure counterfeit versions of its weight loss drug, Wegovy, containing semaglutide. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/lilly-finds-bacteria-other-impurities-mounjaro-zepbound-knockoffs-2024-03-07/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.webmd.com/obesity/mounjaro-side-effects> - Mounjaro (tirzepatide) is a medication used to treat type 2 diabetes and assist with weight loss. Common side effects include gastrointestinal issues such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and constipation. These symptoms are typically mild to moderate and tend to diminish over time as the body adjusts to the medication. Other side effects may include decreased appetite, abdominal pain, heartburn, fatigue, injection site reactions, headache, and low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) in people with type 2 diabetes. Serious side effects can occur, including pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas), gallbladder problems, kidney problems, and serious allergic reactions. It's important to monitor for these side effects and consult a healthcare provider if they occur. ([webmd.com](https://www.webmd.com/obesity/mounjaro-side-effects?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.pritikin.com/your-health/health-benefits/healthy-weight-loss/weight-loss-medications/mounjaro-weight-loss-guide.html> - Mounjaro (tirzepatide) is a medication that has shown promise in aiding weight loss and improving blood sugar control. Its impact on these factors can potentially reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases, offering a holistic health benefit. However, it's important to be aware of potential risks and side effects associated with Mounjaro. Common side effects include gastrointestinal discomfort such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and constipation. These symptoms are typically mild to moderate and tend to diminish over time as the body adjusts to the medication. Other side effects may include decreased appetite, abdominal pain, heartburn, fatigue, injection site reactions, headache, and low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) in people with type 2 diabetes. Serious side effects can occur, including pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas), gallbladder problems, kidney problems, and serious allergic reactions. It's essential to monitor for these side effects and consult a healthcare provider if they occur. ([pritikin.com](https://www.pritikin.com/your-health/health-benefits/healthy-weight-loss/weight-loss-medications/mounjaro-weight-loss-guide.html?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://apnews.com/article/9718480e110eace3e91e0a2bcdc5e536> - The FDA has approved a new version of the diabetes drug Mounjaro, named Zepbound, for weight loss. Zepbound, also known as tirzepatide, has shown to help users lose 40 to 60 pounds in testing. The drug is approved for adults with a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher or those who are overweight with related health conditions. It should be used alongside a reduced-calorie diet and regular exercise. Studies demonstrated significant weight loss among participants, even higher than previous weight-loss drugs like Wegovy. However, side effects include gastrointestinal issues, and about 10% of participants dropped out due to these effects. Despite the approval, access may be limited due to insurance coverage issues, and the cost is projected at around $1,000 monthly. The drug is expected to be available in the U.S. by the end of the year, with some concerns about availability due to high demand. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/9718480e110eace3e91e0a2bcdc5e536?utm_source=openai))