



Medically Supported Weight Loss (MSWL) Frequently Asked Questions

Note: Here is some general information for your Client to discuss with their healthcare provider. This information does not in any way constitute medical advice, an attempt to diagnose a medical condition, or substitute for medical treatment. **OPTAVIA®** recommends that they contact their healthcare provider before starting and throughout their weight loss journey.

General Questions

What is Medically Supported Weight Loss (MSWL)?

Obesity is a chronic disease primarily approached with weight loss. MSWL combines the use of weight loss medications, or when appropriate surgical interventions, with nutrition, exercise, and lifestyle behavior modifications. MSWL is provided under the guidance of a healthcare team that encompasses Physicians, Nurses, Dietitians, Counselors, and other healthcare professionals.

Why is Medically Supported Weight Loss (MSWL) important to OPTAVIA?

Clinical trials with the new anti-obesity medications show that they are far more effective in helping people lose weight than the previous weight loss medications. Currently, only one of the new medications is approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for weight loss (i.e., Wegovy). The reality is that there are many types of weight loss medications currently being developed and studied that will come to market in the coming years.

In the future, once the FDA reviews and approves the new medications, healthcare providers will have access to a greater number of these new generation weight loss medications, which they can prescribe. However, proper nutrition, lifestyle and behavior modifications will continue to be essential to support individuals taking these weight loss medications.

How does OPTAVIA complement Medically Supported Weight Loss (MSWL)?

OPTAVIA's Program, Plans and Products can be complementary to the weight loss medications, by offering a holistic approach to obesity management.

At **OPTAVIA**, our mission is to offer the world Lifelong Transformation, One Healthy Habit at a Time®. Many of our Clients come to us first for weight loss, which acts as a catalyst for larger, holistic lifestyle changes. Some individual's genetic, metabolic, hormonal and behavioral influences make losing weight and keeping it off more difficult. For those Clients, pharmaceutical intervention in combination with proper nutrition, behavior, and lifestyle modifications, could help them achieve their health goals.

Is OPTAVIA shifting away from its mission of Lifelong Transformation, One Healthy Habit at a Time by supporting individuals on weight loss medications?

Absolutely not. Clients using weight loss medications need what **OPTAVIA** offers more than ever.

Weight loss medications alone are not the answer, they are an additional tool in the toolbox for weight management. When individuals are taking the medications, proper nutrition, lifestyle and behavior modification are important. Supporting weight loss and maintenance happens, when someone changes their habits to support their new healthy lifestyle.

When does muscle weakness (loss) increase with weight loss?

In general, muscle loss occurs with weight loss. The amount of muscle loss can be impacted by several factors, including but not limited to the type and dose of medication, dietary intake, inactivity, and/or rate of weight loss. The greater the muscle loss, the greater the risk of muscle weakness.^[1] To minimize muscle loss, resistance exercise coupled with adequate nutrition, high quality protein intake and hydration are important.

Medical Questions

Who is eligible for weight loss medications?

Each medication has a specific eligibility criterion as defined by the FDA. Generally, individuals with a BMI ≥ 30 or individuals with a BMI ≥ 27 along with other obesity related disease, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol are candidates for weight loss medications.

An individual's clinical care team (e.g., doctor or nurse practitioner) will make the determination for weight loss medication, based on the weight and medical profile of each individual.

What is a GLP-1 RA and how does it work?

GLP-1 RA stands for Glucagon-like Peptide-1 Receptor Agonist. The GLP-1 RA (i.e., Wegovy) is the newest prescription medication to be approved by the FDA for weight loss. GLP-1 is a hormone made in the intestinal lining (incretin hormone) and secreted in response to food intake.

GLP-1 RA has different mechanisms of action by which it can help with weight loss:

- It promotes release of insulin in response to food intake, thereby helping to manage blood sugar levels.^[2]
- It works to slow down the gastrointestinal track, (i.e., slows stomach emptying), which helps to make you feel full longer.^[2]
- It works in the brain to decrease food cravings, and appetite. It thus regulates hunger sensations, satiety, and satiation.^[2]

What is the difference between Ozempic and Wegovy?

Though Ozempic and Wegovy include the chemical compound, semaglutide, their indications for use and recommended dosages by the FDA are different. Ozempic is FDA approved for treatment of Type 2 diabetes and Wegovy for treatment of obesity. It is up to the sole discretion of the healthcare provider to determine how and when to use these medications for their patients.

How are GLP-1 RAs dosed?

Individuals' healthcare providers will provide the relevant guidance regarding the medication dose, how to use, and side effects, after a full medical assessment.

The GLP-1 RA medication (Wegovy) is an injectable prescription medication; it comes as a single-use pen; used under the direction of the healthcare provider.

The GLP-1 RA medications are started at a low dose and then adjusted every few weeks. The decision to increase the dose is based on how the person is doing with hunger/appetite control and if they are experiencing any side effects.^[2]

Individuals' healthcare providers will closely monitor and adjust the medication dose as needed.

What are the side effects of GLP-1 RAs?

Some people won't experience any side effects. Others may experience nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or constipation (these are the most commonly reported side effects). They will vary from person to person, and the dose of the medication. Side effects may also be related to how quickly someone is adjusted on the medication. We recommend you contact your healthcare provider and/or pharmacist to review side effects.

Can you ever go off these medications? What happens when someone stops taking the medications?

Working with their healthcare provider, individuals can certainly choose to stop taking the medications or may have their dose lowered.

Overtime, the food cravings may return. Appetite and hunger increases and more food may be consumed. This all may lead to regaining weight.

Individuals may minimize regaining weight with adoption of healthy nutrition and lifestyle behavior modification.

How do I know if the medications are safe?

The FDA requires ongoing safety monitoring of all prescription medications by the manufacturers and ongoing evaluations and guidance are provided. It is up to the sole discretion of an individual's healthcare provider to review with them the use and safety of a medication.

Are these medications covered by insurance?

Each individual's insurance company determines if and which weight loss medications they will cover. It is essential that an individual consult their plan provider to determine if there is coverage available and work with their healthcare provider to get the appropriate authorizations. Some insurance providers are currently requiring individuals to be on six months of a nutrition, lifestyle, behavior modification program, prior to receiving weight loss medications. Any such requirement may vary from insurance company to insurance company and from state to state. Therefore, individuals need to contact their insurer to determine specific eligibility requirements.

How long do people stay on weight loss medications?

How long someone stays on weight loss medications is a decision between them and their healthcare provider. Individuals will feel the effects (less hunger/appetite, decreased food intake) of the weight loss medication at different times and dosages. Some may feel the effects on a much lower dose than others. How long it takes to obtain their goal weight will also be very individualized.

Once a person obtains their goal weight, they may want to try and completely stop the medication, or they may try to decrease the dose; this is a decision between them and their healthcare provider. As they decrease their medication dose, the individual will monitor to see if their hunger / appetite starts to return or the volume of food they are eating increases. There may be those individuals who will always need a small dose of the medication to help with their hunger and cravings.

The goal is to help keep the individual from regaining their weight. A key part of this process is guiding the individual to understand the importance of healthy nutrition and lifestyle during the time they are on the medications. If the individual can create habits of healthy eating, exercise, and lifestyle, they may have a better chance to help maintain their weight loss when they are off medications.

Coaching Questions

Does reaching goal weight alter the cravings?

Reaching goal weight and adopting a healthy lifestyle and behavior modification, may instill a sense of self-confidence that the individual can handle their cravings. But we must acknowledge that one of the mechanisms of action of GLP-1 RAs is to help control cravings. Hence stopping the medications may make the cravings return. If the individual can create habits of healthy eating, exercise, and lifestyle, they may have a better chance of managing their cravings, appetite, hunger and to help maintain their weight loss when they are off medications.

Who will answer questions regarding weight loss medications?

The Client's healthcare provider will be the one prescribing, adjusting, and answering any questions about the weight loss medication. Independent **OPTAVIA** Coaches should always recommend their Clients seek professional support from their healthcare provider with respect to medication recommendations.

What is the independent **OPTAVIA** Coach's role with medications?

The individual's healthcare provider is solely responsible for recommending, prescribing, adjusting, and following up with the Client regarding any medications. An independent **OPTAVIA** Coach's guidance and support do not in any way constitute medical advice or substitute for medical treatment by the individual's healthcare provider.

OPTAVIA Coaches should always recommend their Clients seek professional support from their healthcare provider with respect to medication recommendations.

Per [OPTAVIA's Coaching Guidelines](#), the Coach's role is to support their Clients on the **OPTAVIA** Program, Plans and Products.

What is the liability for Coaches who may have Clients on weight loss medications?

Per [OPTAVIA's Coaching Guidelines](#), an OPTAVIA Coach's role is to support their Clients on the OPTAVIA Program, Plans and Products. An independent OPTAVIA Coach's guidance and support do not in any way constitute medical advice or substitute for medical treatment by the individual's healthcare provider. OPTAVIA Coaches should always recommend their Clients seek professional support from their healthcare provider with respect to medication recommendations.

When is it appropriate for an OPTAVIA Coach to support a Client considering or currently taking weight loss medications?

OPTAVIA Coaches meet Clients where they are so, there is never a wrong time to become involved with a Client to guide them regarding healthy habits.

It is optimal to support the Client in healthy nutrition, lifestyle, and behavior modification within the Habits of Health Transformational System while the Client is on the medications. Establishing the foundation for healthy nutrition and lifestyle is critical as the Client possibly transitions from medications.

Per [OPTAVIA's Coaching Guidelines](#), an OPTAVIA Coach's role is to support their Clients on the OPTAVIA Program, Plans and Products.

What is the role of independent OPTAVIA Coaches?

The role of the Coaches does not change, per [OPTAVIA's Coaching Guidelines](#):

- Offer support on OPTAVIA's Program, Plans and Products
- Offer Community Support
- Offer the Habits of Health® Transformational System (HOHTS)
- Offer Fuelings to provide macro- and micronutrients, fiber and probiotics to support overall health and wellbeing

References

1. Sargeant JA, Henson J, King JA, Yates T, Khunti K, Davies MJ. A Review of the Effects of Glucagon-Like Peptide-1 Receptor Agonists and Sodium-Glucose Cotransporter 2 Inhibitors on Lean Body Mass in Humans. *Endocrinol Metab (Seoul)*. 2019 Sep;34(3):247-262. doi: 10.3803/EnM.2019.34.3.247.
2. Wegovy Prescribing Information; <https://www.novo-pi.com/wegovy.pdf>. Accessed November 2, 2023