



©Gary V Koyen, Ph.D.

Cruxpoint Health Breakthrough, Inc.

Incretin Hormone Drugs for Weight Loss

1. How They Work

- These drugs mimic gut hormones (GLP-1, and in tirzepatide's case, both GLP-1 and GIP).
- They slow stomach emptying, reduce appetite, and influence reward pathways in the brain.
- This makes it easier for people to eat less without feeling as hungry.

2. Effectiveness

- Very effective compared to older weight loss drugs.
- Semaglutide (Wegovy) → ~15% average body weight loss in trials.
- Tirzepatide (Zepbound) → up to ~20% weight loss (close to results from bariatric surgery for some patients).
- Weight loss tends to plateau after 12–18 months.
- If stopped, most people regain much or all of the weight within a year, since the appetite returns.

3. Health Benefits Beyond Weight Loss

- Improve blood sugar control (initially developed for diabetes).
- Reduce cardiovascular risks (semaglutide showed fewer heart attacks, strokes, and CV deaths in obese patients).
- May improve sleep apnea, fatty liver disease, blood pressure, and joint pain as a secondary benefit of weight loss.

4. Side Effects and Risks

- Common: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, fatigue.
- Serious but rare: pancreatitis, gallbladder disease, intestinal obstruction, possible thyroid tumors (seen in rodents).
- Unknowns: Long-term safety over decades isn't fully established yet.

- Many people have to stop due to intolerable GI side effects (estimates ~20–30%).

5. Limitations & Realities

- Not a “cure”
- Obesity is a chronic condition with many causal factors
- These drugs can be a boost, a way to jump start weight loss
- Achieving an optimal body composition requires dramatic life changes
- These are “chronic” medications
- Without needed changes in choices and behaviors, the drugs require lifelong use to maintain some degree of weight loss for most people
- Cost is high (but going down) and insurance coverage is inconsistent
- Weight loss varies significantly: some lose 20%+, others lose little, a few gain weight

6. The Bottom Line

- Game-changers in obesity treatment: far more effective than previous drugs
- Most honest truth:
 - They work, but are no solution
 - Side effects, cost, and access are major barriers
 - They need to be seen as part of a long-term health plan, not a short-term fix
 - If combined with lifestyle changes, they can help initiate better health outcomes