

FAQs - Common Side Effects and Nutrition Tips for GLP-1 Medications

Q: Is it normal to experience nausea or vomiting on a GLP-1 Medication?

Nausea: Nausea is a common side effect within 24-72 hours after starting the injection. It is most often mild and usually improves over the course of the week. With each subsequent injection the nausea may return but should be milder. By the end of the month, this should be very mild or gone. Expect nausea with every increase in dose but again, it should improve over the course of treatment.

What may help:

- ✓ **Space out meals:** eat smaller and more frequent meals
- ✓ **Bland foods:** try nibbling on bland, easily digestible foods to help prevent overwhelming your stomach.
- ✓ **Hydration and Electrolytes:** Staying hydrated is crucial, but when nausea strikes, drinking lots of water may not be appealing. Instead, opt for cold beverages or electrolyte-infused fluids, which can ease discomfort.
- ✓ Avoid foods that are high in fat or processed carbohydrates for the rest of the day and into the next day Fried, greasy foods or high-carbohydrate, high-sugar foods and beverages like juice, soda, cake, or candy may exacerbate nausea symptoms.
- ✓ Eat a protein containing breakfast or snack the morning of the injection. This will help to ensure that you are meeting your protein goals for the day and may help to ease the stomach.
- ✓ Consider a clear protein supplement, such as **Seeq** or **Premier Protein Clear**. These come in fruit flavors and can be mixed with water, and may be tolerated more easily than a chocolate or vanilla protein shake.

Other Tips to Alleviate Nausea

- **Ginger:** Some people find relief from nausea by incorporating ginger into their diet. Fresh ginger or ginger powder can be incorporated into recipes and spice mixes. Ginger tea may help calm symptoms of nausea.
- Avoid strong smelling or spicy foods
- Try experimenting with hot versus cold foods. Some people find that warm foods such as soups are soothing, while others may find relief with foods that are chilled, such as a popsicle or smoothie.

- **Opt for Easily Digestible Foods:** Raw vegetables can sometimes exacerbate nausea due to their difficulty in digestion. Consider steaming, boiling, or baking vegetables to aid digestion. Opt for easier-to-digest options like yogurt and smoothies.
- Overconsumption of artificial sweeteners can be a cause of stomach upset. If you are experiencing nausea cut back on use of artificial sweeteners for the day to see if this provides relief.

If you continue to have difficulty despite your efforts, **Zofran (ondansetron)** can be prescribed. Please reach out to your doctor or nurse practitioner to discuss symptoms that are hard to control!

Vomiting

It's crucial to understand that **vomiting is not a normal occurrence** on these medications. Not only can it lead to significant electrolyte imbalances, but it also signals that something else might be going on. If you are experiencing vomiting, please reach out to your provider as soon as possible.

Q: How can I remedy some of the GI-related side effects like gas or bloating?

- These side effects are common on GLP-1 medications, and occur as a result of slowed gastrointestinal motility or an abrupt increase in fiber.
- Women should aim for **21-25 grams of fiber** per day
- Men should aim for **30-38 grams of fiber** per day.

Low-carbohydrate, fiber-containing foods include:

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| ✓ avocado | ✓ chia seeds or flax seeds |
| ✓ leafy greens | ✓ blackberries and raspberries |
| ✓ pecans, macadamia nuts, or hazelnuts | ✓ broccoli stalks, Brussels sprouts, artichokes, and asparagus. |

Alleviating symptoms of gas and bloating:

- Decrease the amount of fiber you are getting if above the daily-recommended amount.
- For acute relief, consider Gas-X, which contains simethicone, or Pepto-Bismol.

Sulfur Burps - burps that smell like eggs! They are caused by the production of hydrogen sulfide gas from fermenting food in the GI tract. Due to slowed digestion, this gas rises upward rather than passing through, resulting in unpleasant burps that smell like rotten eggs.

Things to avoid:

- ✗ **Using Straws:** Straws can worsen the gas situation, as you have to create suction to get the liquid to come up.
- ✗ **Carbonated Beverages:** Any carbonated drinks, regardless of flavor, can exacerbate sulfur burps due to the infused gas.
- ✗ **Eating Too Quickly:** Rapid consumption of food can lead to increased gas production, so slow down and chew your food thoroughly.
- ✗ **High Sulfur Foods:** Foods high in sulfur content, such as eggs, cruciferous veggies like broccoli and brussels sprouts, and high-fiber foods like beans and seeds, can worsen sulfur burps.
- ✗ **Sugar Alcohols:** Watch out for sugar alcohols commonly found in sugar-free products, as they can also contribute to gas production and exacerbate sulfur burps.

What Might Help:

- ✓ **Hydration:** Water can help flush out some of the gas
- ✓ **Digestive Enzymes:** Over-the-counter digestive enzymes can aid the digestive process.
- ✓ **Peppermint Tea:** This tea is known for its calming properties.
- ✓ **Chamomile Tea:** Another soothing tea option that can help alleviate symptoms.

Q: Can I use exercise as a tool to help relieve symptoms?

We recommend about **30 minutes of movement per day**, such as walking. Walking helps get the bowel moving and facilitates gas passing. This can help decrease bloating and discomfort.

Incorporating **2-3 days of strength or resistance training** per week may also help relieve symptoms, and will help to preserve and build muscle, which helps promote weight loss.

Don't Forget About Protein!

- Protein is vital to help us retain and build lean muscle mass as we lose weight, and will help keep us full for longer.
- Ensuring that you are getting in adequate protein throughout the day can also help curb cravings and regulate hunger.
- In general, aim for **80-100 grams of protein** per day.
- Remember to **eat the protein on your plate first** then the other foods if you still have the appetite.

Q: Since starting a GLP-1, I have been experiencing constipation more frequently. What can help?

Constipation is a common side effect of GLP-1 medications and results from delayed emptying of food from the stomach into the intestines. The delay in this process helps to regulate hunger, but the delay in transit time for food and waste means that more water is pulled into the colon, leading to hard, dry stools.

There are ways to remedy this:

- Ensure that you are drinking enough fluid! We recommend **at least 64 oz of non-caffeinated fluid per day**. But if you are experiencing constipation and already drinking 64 ounces it may help to increase your fluid intake by 16-32 oz.
- Make sure that you are meeting but not exceeding your fiber needs. **Excessive fiber intake can lead to constipation.**
- Make sure that you are not going too long without taking in food or skipping meals. Having food in the digestive tract promotes motility. **Skipping meals can exacerbate constipation.**
- If you are still experiencing constipation despite your efforts, we recommend **Miralax**, purchased over the counter and taken daily. Take caution with fiber supplementation, as bulk-forming fiber supplements may exacerbate GI problems if you are not taking in adequate fluid.
- In addition, **250 mg Magnesium Citrate capsules** can be purchased over the counter. We recommend taking 2 at bedtime to help relieve symptoms.

Q: Is it normal that I have seen an increase in headaches since starting on a GLP-1 medication?

Headaches are a common occurrence, especially the day after starting GLP-1 medications. Headaches are considered to be a direct side effect from the medication AND from dehydration.

- Consider incorporating electrolyte products like powders or drinks into your routine. These can help replenish lost fluids and minerals. Some examples include **Sugar Free LiquidIV**, **Propel**, **Gatorade Zero**, or **LMNT**.
- Broths or soups are also good options to boost hydration and maintain electrolyte balance. Consider using **bone broth**, which can be a soothing warm beverage or a soup base that contains protein and electrolytes!
- Paying attention to your pre-injection nutrition can make a difference. Ensuring a balanced diet with adequate protein intake, particularly before your injection, can mitigate this side effect and influence how you feel afterward.

If headaches persist despite these measures, remember that they often improve over time as your body adjusts to the medication. However, if your symptoms persist or become unbearable, please reach out to a provider to help address the problem.

Q: Sometimes I just do not feel like eating. What can I do to ensure my body is getting the nutrients it needs?

Whether you're just starting out on GLP-1 meds, or starting to increase your dose, it's common to notice some shifts in your hunger levels or how you feel about food. You might find yourself not feeling hungry at all, having less of a desire for food, or feeling full much quicker than usual.

If you find yourself in this phase, it's important to ensure you're getting enough nutrition, even if you are not eating as much as you normally do.

GLP-1 medications work most effectively when we are properly nourishing our bodies. Skipping out on food and protein may cause us to lose lean muscle tissue, which would hinder weight loss.

Here are some ways to help ensure adequate intake, even on days where your appetite may be lacking:

- **Fluids:** Pay attention to your fluid intake, especially around meal times. Drinking too much liquid before or during meals can fill up your stomach, leaving less room for food. Try limiting fluids an hour before and 30 minutes after meals to optimize your appetite.
- **Reassess Your Portions:** If you're used to loading up on large salads or bulky veggies to feel satisfied, it might be time for a reassessment. Instead of focusing solely on volume, consider incorporating fiber-rich foods like chia seeds or avocado into smaller portions to maintain satiety without overloading your stomach.
- **Fats:** Remember that fats can be incredibly filling. Experimenting with leaner cuts of meat, for example, might mean that you don't fill up so quickly.

Vitamins

When consuming less food on the GLP-1 medications, it is important to consider adding a multivitamin to your daily routine to ensure that you aren't missing out on essential nutrients.

A multivitamin with iron, such as those from **Equate (Walmart)** or **Nature Made** are adequate. We recommend a chewable or a capsule rather than gummies, as gummy vitamins are not complete.

Try to consume your multivitamin with food, as taking a multivitamin on an empty stomach is known to trigger stomach upset for some people.