

Ozempic® (Semaglutide) Patient Guide

A Comprehensive Summary on Proper Usage, Step-Up Schedules, and Managing Side Effects

Welcome to your personal guide for Ozempic® (semaglutide). Ozempic mimics a naturally occurring hormone called GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide-1). It helps the body lower blood sugar levels when they are too high, slows down gastric emptying, and communicates with the brain to increase feelings of fullness. This treatment supports effective type 2 diabetes management and metabolic optimization.

1. How and When to Administer Ozempic

To ensure medication safety and steady therapeutic drug levels, carefully follow these injection instructions:

- **Frequency & Schedule:** Ozempic is injected once weekly, on the same day each week, at any time of day. It does not depend on meal schedules and can be taken before, during, or after food.
- **Where to Inject:** This medication is delivered subcutaneously (under the skin). The optimal areas are your front thighs, your abdomen (avoiding within 2 inches of your navel), or your outer upper arms. Change your exact site each week to keep your skin healthy.
- **Handling and Storage:** Prior to first use, keep new pens in their box inside the refrigerator between 2°C and 8°C (do not freeze). Once open, you can store your current pen in the fridge or at room temperature (under 30°C) for up to 56 days. Always remove and safely discard the needle after every single injection; never store the pen with a needle attached.
- **Missed Doses:** If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember—provided it is within 5 days of the missed date. If more than 5 days have passed, skip the missed dose and resume your regular routine on your next planned day.

2. Managing Side Effects Effectively

Side effects are typical when you first start the medication or right after you step up to a higher dose tier. They are usually temporary and diminish over a few weeks.

Common Discomforts & Actionable Tips

- **Nausea & Reflux:** Avoid eating heavy, high-fat, fried, or highly spiced meals. Shift your focus toward smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day. Avoid lying down for at least an hour after eating.

- **Constipation:** The medication works by slowing down your stomach, which can cause stool to move slower. Counteract this by sipping plenty of water (aim for 2 liters daily) and tracking your intake of dietary fiber.
- **Diarrhea:** If you experience loose stools, switch to bland options (like rice, toast, or clear broth) and stay hydrated to replenish lost fluids and electrolytes.
- **Headaches or Mild Fatigue:** These are often side effects of lower caloric intake or subtle dehydration. Keeping up with your hydration can help ease this transition.

3. Dose Escalation & Step-Up Schedule

Your body needs time to get used to the GLP-1 hormone increase. Your doctor will scale your dose upward in a controlled manner to reduce gastrointestinal side effects.

Timeline	Dose	Clinical Objective & Biological Focus	Aims and Patient Targets
Weeks 1–4	0.25 mg	Initiation Phase: A small introductory dose designed to gently prepare your digestive system. It is not intended for complete blood sugar control yet.	Build your routine and focus on consistent weekly tracking. Get used to checking and setting up the pen correctly.
Weeks 5–8	0.5 mg	First Maintenance Phase: The standard therapeutic dose where most patients start noticing measurable, positive impacts on fasting blood glucose levels and fullness.	Notice a steadier relationship with food. Focus on listening to early satiety signals to manage portions naturally.
Weeks 9–12	1.0 mg	Advanced Maintenance: For individuals needing further control over blood sugar or metabolic health. Stepping up is only recommended if the 0.5 mg dose is well tolerated.	Observe a clear flattening of blood sugar peaks. Practice eating slowly to match delayed digestion rates.
Weeks 13+	2.0 mg	Maximum Therapeutic Tier: The highest standard dosage available, used only when clinical evaluations indicate a clear need for additional metabolic support.	Maintain long-term lifestyle gains, regular tracking, and complete regular HbA1c lab checks with your clinical team.

When to Hold Back: The step-up schedule is a map, not a race. If you are experiencing uncomfortable nausea or digestive distress at the end of a 4-week block, speak to your healthcare provider. They will often advise staying on your current lower dose for an extra month until your symptoms fully settle.

Urgent Symptoms Requiring Prompt Medical Attention

While minor side effects are manageable, certain rare and severe complications require you to seek immediate professional medical attention:

- **Severe, Unrelenting Upper Stomach Pain:** Pain that begins below your ribs and radiates straight through to your back, often accompanied by severe vomiting. This is a primary warning sign of acute pancreatitis.
- **Sudden Vision Changes:** If you notice rapid shifts in your eyesight or worsening diabetic retinopathy symptoms, contact your ophthalmologist or doctor.
- **Signs of Hypoglycemia (Low Blood Sugar):** Dizziness, sweating, sudden shaking, blurred vision, or confusion. This risk increases if you take Ozempic alongside insulin or a sulfonylurea medication.
- **Allergic Reactions:** Any swelling of the face, tongue, or lips, sudden throat tightening, difficulty breathing, or a widespread severe skin rash.

4. Treatment Aims and Looking Forward

True progress with Ozempic is measured through consistency over the weeks rather than daily shifts. Keep these goals in view:

1. **Glycemic Improvement:** Expect to see adjustments in your morning fasting blood sugar levels over the first few weeks. Your doctor will likely measure your long-term HbA1c at the 3-month or 6-month mark to gauge complete treatment success.
2. **Steady Weight Reduction:** For individuals monitoring weight management targets alongside glycemic control, a healthy and safe pace is roughly 0.5 to 1.0 kg per week. Avoid chasing extreme drops, which can lead to muscle loss.
3. **Building Habits:** Use the decreased appetite and freedom from constant food cravings to form meaningful health habits, such as regular physical movement and mindful eating patterns.

This leaflet acts as a supportive summary. Always follow the explicit instructions and advice of your prescribing physician or clinical care provider.