

GLP-1 Receptor Agonists (Semaglutide)

What it does:

- Semaglutide helps slow the progression of kidney disease and improve blood glucose levels in people with kidney disease and type 2 diabetes. It also helps reduce their risk of heart disease, stroke and death.
- Semaglutide can also be used to promote weight loss.

How it works:

Semaglutide mimics a natural hormone in your body called GLP1, which helps regulate blood glucose levels and appetite. It improves blood glucose levels by:

- Telling your pancreas to release more of your own insulin.
- Telling your liver to slow the release of stored sugars (to keep blood sugar from rising too high).
- Slowing how quickly food leaves your stomach, making you feel fuller for longer.
- Sending signals to your brain to decrease the feeling of hunger.

This medication reduces inflammation and stress on the kidneys, lowering the amount of protein in your urine.

How to take it:

- Semaglutide is a once-a-week injection, given on the same day each week.
- To reduce the risk of side effects, it starts at a low dose, which increases over time as directed by your healthcare provider.
- Take a missed dose as soon as you remember. If more than 5 days have passed, skip the missed dose and take your next dose on the regularly scheduled day. Do not “double-up” the dose as this may increase side effects. Make sure that you contact your prescriber for direction if you miss more than 2 doses, as you may need to resume at a lower dose.
- Make sure to drink water each day so you do not become dehydrated.
- Dialysis patients: Please connect with team to discuss appropriate fluid intake.
- We encourage you to work with your renal dietician to get support for a healthy weight loss.
- Engage in physical activity to maintain muscle mass. Aim for 20 minutes of physical activity per day.
- If you get sick with nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea (dehydrated), stop taking this medication until you feel better.
- Store your medication in the refrigerator until opened. After opening, you can keep it at room temperature for up to 8 weeks.

What side effects I should expect:

Most people tolerate semaglutide well. Side effects are usually mild in the first few weeks and improve over time. Possible side effects include:

- Nausea, vomiting, pain in the abdomen, diarrhea or constipation. To avoid or decrease some of these side effects:
 - Eat smaller, more frequent meals.
 - Eat light, bland foods and avoid fried, greasy, spicy, or sweet foods.
 - Drink clear or ice-cold drinks (water is best, avoid pop or juice).
- Low blood sugar is more likely if you are also using insulin or other diabetic drugs, which may need dose adjustment to minimize risk of low blood sugars.
- Injection site reactions, including redness, swelling and/or pain are possible but uncommon. Rotating the injection site can help prevent these reactions.
- Rare but serious side effects can include inflammation of the pancreas (pancreatitis), gallbladder problems, and worsening of existing eye conditions if blood sugar drops quickly. Contact your doctor if any of the following occur: i) change in vision or ii) severe abdominal pain.