



Injections to aid weight loss

Liraglutide is approved for use in patients with Type 2 diabetes, but clinical studies have revealed that it is also an effective weight loss agent, and can be prescribed for patients who are overweight or obese. Marketed under the brand names 'Victoza and Saxenda', Liraglutide can be prescribed privately 'off-label' to help with weight loss at the discretion of a doctor, in association with a diet and exercise programme.

Liraglutide is a daily subcutaneous injection, and works by making patients feel more full and therefore satisfied with less food. It also reduces the speed at which the stomach empties, so making patients treated with Liraglutide crave food less, and it also improves the response to the patients own insulin.

How effective is Liraglutide?

In a Europe-wide trial of 554 people with a body mass index of between 30 and 40 (making them clinically obese), patients lost significant amounts of weight. The trial compared Liraglutide to Orlistat and placebo (a 'dummy' injection).

Sticking to a calorie controlled diet and taking exercise, at week 20, the following results were observed:

- Average weight loss was 7.2kg for those on the 3mg dose, compared with those taking the obesity medication Orlistat (Xenical), who lost 4.1 kg, and those taking the placebo, where the average weight lost was only 2.8 kg
- 76% of patients lost at least 5% of their body weight, compared with 44% on orlistat and 30% on the placebo
- Patients taking the lower 1.2 mg dose lost 4.8 kg, those taking the 1.8mg dose lost 5.5 kg and those taking the 2.4mg dose lost 6.3 kg

Am I suitable for Victoza (Liraglutide)?

If you are a Type 2 diabetic then you **MUST** speak to your doctor about this medication to control your condition. You should NOT attempt to change your treatment regimen without speaking to your GP. If you are looking to be prescribed Liraglutide for weight loss, a consultation with a doctor is mandatory. Prescribing Liraglutide "off label" for weight loss is becoming more popular as it is now believed that the overall health benefits outweigh the risk of side effects. The drug is not suitable for those of normal weight who wish to achieve a subnormal one.

What are the side effects of Liraglutide?

Most patients taking **Liraglutide** do not experience any side effects. Some patients report nausea and occasional vomiting, but not severe enough to make them stop taking the medication. These symptoms were generally short-lived. Other side effects are rare.

There have been concerns that **Liraglutide** may cause thyroid tumours after experimental mice developed this cancer. However, it is thought that mice have a specific sensitivity, which does not apply to humans. There have also been reports of an increased likelihood of pancreatitis and gall stones.



What do I do if I wish to be considered for Liraglutide treatment?

Book an appointment to see Dr Eccleston to assess your suitability for treatment. The initial consultation costs £75, and blood tests are chargeable at £150 in addition to this. All patients must have a cholesterol, liver, kidney and diabetes blood test prior to commencing treatment. You will have your weight and blood pressure checked, and your BMI calculated. If your BMI is over 30, and there are no contra-indications, then you may be prescribed the drug on a private prescription. If your BMI is between 27 and 30, then you may be prescribed the drug if you have other risk factors such as high blood pressure or raised cholesterol. Those with a BMI of less than 27 will not be prescribed Liraglutide.

The cost of Liraglutide depends on the dose used, but based on the maximum dose of 3mg as used in the obesity trials, the daily cost of the injection is approximately £10. Lower doses can be used, particularly if side effects occur, though weight loss is not as rapid or significant on these doses.

You will need to be reviewed and weighed on a monthly basis (£75 per appointment).