



**Where the world comes for answers**

Welcome to the  
***EMPOWER*** program  
at Boston Children's Hospital

*We aim to provide high quality, up-to-date, and evidence-based medical weight management therapy for children and adolescents. We hope to help patients achieve healthy weight and weight-related outcomes in a positive and supportive environment.*

***Visit us online!***



***[www.childrenshospital.org/programs/empower](http://www.childrenshospital.org/programs/empower)***



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## Welcome!

**Welcome to the *EMPOWER* program at Boston Children's Hospital!** Our goal is to provide excellent, evidence-based weight management in a positive and supportive environment.

Obesity is a chronic condition that requires long-term treatment and frequent clinical visits.

### What we expect from patient/family:

- Attendance at all scheduled appointments:
  - Medical visits with a medical doctor (MD) or nurse practitioner (NP) every 3 months, or more often, if needed
  - Nutritional counseling in at least 2 group sessions, with the option of additional individual nutritional counseling
  - Mental health visit in our program one time per year
- For all patients < 18 years old, a parent or guardian must be present for appointments.
  - We suggest that all patients should bring a support person, such as a parent or family member, to appointments (regardless of the patient's age).
- Lifestyle changes are an important part of any medical treatment plan and, therefore, we expect the patient to work toward nutrition and physical activity goals while in the program, in addition to taking a medication for weight management.

### What patient/family can expect from us:

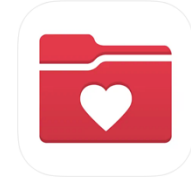
- Clear communication throughout the patient's time in our program
- Sensitive, patient-focused and evidence-based medical care
- Regular appointments with the patient's medical team
- Opportunities for individual nutrition sessions in addition to the required group nutrition sessions
- The ability to communicate with us between visits (MyChart Patient Portal messages preferred for non-urgent issues)

*Our program focuses on medical approaches to weight management. Some patients may not opt for this approach and we are happy to help facilitate referrals to the Adolescent Bariatric Surgery Program (provides consultations and preparation for "weight loss" surgery) or the Strategies for Teen Empowerment and Physical Health (STEP) Program through Adolescent/Young Adult Medicine (focus on helping patients with disordered eating) at Boston Children's Hospital, depending on the patient's needs. If any of these other programs seem like a better fit for the patient, please contact us to discuss options by sending a message to the patient's medical team through the MyChart Patient Portal or calling 617-355-5159.*



## How to Contact Us

- To schedule, reschedule, or cancel an appointment, call our administrative team at 617-355-5159.
- For prescription refill requests or any non-urgent medical questions, please message the patient's MD and NP through the MyChart patient portal (available via computer or phone/tablet app).
  - Sign up here:  
<https://mychart.childrenshospital.org/MyChart/Authentication/Login?>
- For any urgent medical problems related to the patient's care in our program, please page the patient's MD or NP (or the MD-on-call if after hours) by calling 617-355-6000.
- If the patient is experiencing a medical emergency, please call 911 or present to the nearest Emergency Department.







## **An Important Note**

During your time in our program, you may hear providers use various terms to refer to weight and weight-related medical issues. We understand that some words like “obesity” may be uncomfortable for some people given negative past experiences. Our hope is to use words that are medically correct but also sensitive to your experience.

As providers, we will always do our best to communicate in a sensitive manner with you, recognizing that obesity and excess weight are medical conditions that, like any other medical condition, are due to many factors often outside of a patient’s control. We encourage patients/families to communicate openly with their providers about what words feel right for them.

Some terms or words you may hear providers use are:

- **Body Mass Index (BMI):** This is a measure of how much someone weighs as compared to their height. Although this is not a perfect measure of how healthy one’s weight might be, it is a measure that providers will track over time. “Healthy” BMI varies according to age and so providers might focus on BMI percentiles (how one’s BMI compares to others of the same age) instead of the absolute value.
- **Obesity:** This is a term that you might hear a lot in the newspaper or other media, and it may or may not always be used correctly. This is actually a medical term used to refer to people with BMI that falls above a certain point, which is set based on studies that show a higher risk for other medical problems like heart disease, diabetes, and liver disease.
- **Overweight:** This is also a term that is used a lot outside of medicine but is actually a medical term. This refers to people with a higher BMI than is considered “healthy” but not high enough to be called “obesity.”

Our providers know that weight and BMI do not define individuals. We aim to provide each patient with an individualized experience that addresses weight in a supportive and sensitive environment.



## Patient Agreement

By agreeing to join the *EMPOWER* program at Boston Children's Hospital, I/we agree to the following:

- **Attend all scheduled visits.**
  - Since emergencies and schedule changes understandably happen, we ask that patients let us know as soon as possible if they cannot make an appointment. In some circumstances, we may be able to see the patient virtually during the scheduled session or to reschedule them on another day (although possibly with a different provider).
  - Patients who have 3 “no show” appointments (i.e., who do not cancel in advance of the visit) will be asked re-evaluate whether they are truly interested in this type of medical weight management and may be asked to leave the program if unable to commit to the recommended visits.
- **Act and speak in a way that shows mutual consideration and respect** for the care team, other patients and families, and clinic staff.
- **Make and work toward lifestyle goals**, including nutrition and physical activity.
- **Be honest and forthcoming with the treatment team**, especially regarding disordered eating behaviors such as binge eating or restrictive eating.
  - The treatment team is here to support the patient and understands that these types of eating behaviors are not uncommon and are not something to feel embarrassed or ashamed about.
  - Being honest is important to ensure that your team can make safe and helpful recommendations to help you reach your goals.
- **Take all medications as prescribed.** Let the treatment team know as soon as possible if:
  - The patient runs out of medications or needs a refill before their next scheduled appointment.
  - The patient has side effects that may be from their medications, which limit their ability to take the medications as prescribed or participate as usual in activities of daily living (e.g., school, work, sports, eating regular meals, etc.).
- **Understand that the patient may be asked to make an appointment sooner than the scheduled sessions**, especially if medical and/or medication issues arise between quarterly medical visits.
- **Understand that medication refills will primarily be provided in the context of a medical visit**, and that the treatment team will generally provide enough medication refills to get the patient to their next quarterly medical visit. If the patient misses an appointment, it may need to be rescheduled (virtual or in person) prior to receiving any medication refills.



## Example Schedule

Month	Visit
January	Initial Medical Visit
February/March	Attend Orientation/ Nutrition Intro group class (virtual) <i>Option to attend virtual advanced nutrition class and/or 1:1 Nutrition Visit</i>
April	Medical follow-up visit <i>(optional nurse visit if starting medication)</i>
May/June	Attend virtual advanced nutrition class and/or 1:1 Nutrition Visit <i>Option to engage with Behavioral Medicine (generally 3 visits in a 6-month span of time, in conjunction with Nutrition visits)</i>
July	Medical follow-up visit
August/September	Attend virtual advanced nutrition class and/or 1:1 Nutrition Visit <i>Option to engage with Behavioral Medicine (generally 3 visits in a 6-month span of time, in conjunction with Nutrition visits)</i>
October	Medical follow-up visit
November/December	Attend virtual advanced nutrition class and/or 1:1 Nutrition Visit <i>Option to engage with Behavioral Medicine (generally 3 visits in a 6-month span of time, in conjunction with Nutrition visits)</i>
January	Medical follow-up visit

*Social work will be offered at any time based on needs and/or upon patient/family request.*

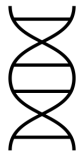


## Obesity and Healthy Metabolism: What You Need To Know

### ***What is obesity and why does it occur?***

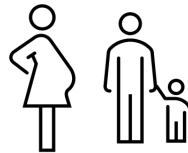
Obesity happens when someone's weight is elevated for someone of their height (elevated BMI). It is a disease that needs treatment because it can put people (kids and adults!) at risk for other conditions.

No one knows exactly why some people are more likely to have obesity, but many scientists are working on this problem and think that it is probably a combination of genetics and environment:



#### **Genetics**

Differences in DNA (your genes, inherited from your family)



#### **Environment**

Events that a person may have before and after birth

Other things that can affect a person's weight include:



#### **Energy Expenditure**

How much energy your body uses.  
This is increased by exercise but can be reduced by "crash" dieting or skipping meals.



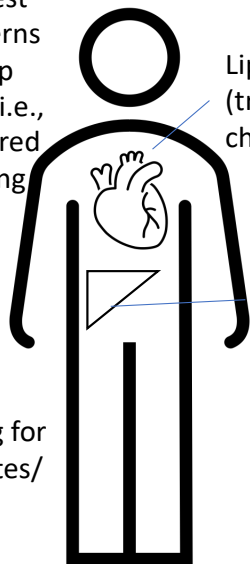
#### **Nutrition**

How much and what one eats can affect their weight  
What we eat can also affect how hungry we feel.

### ***What evaluation might my doctor recommend?***



Sleep test  
if concerns  
for sleep  
apnea (i.e.,  
disordered  
breathing  
during  
sleep)



Lipid levels  
(triglycerides,  
cholesterol)

Liver  
function  
testing to  
look for  
fatty liver



Screening for  
prediabetes/  
diabetes



Possibly genetic testing or other  
hormonal testing

### ***What treatments will my doctor recommend?***



#### **Healthy nutrition**

Focus on low glycemic index  
(GI) foods  
Pre-planned meals and snacks  
(Don't skip meals!)



#### **Exercise**



**Psychologic  
support**  
(behavioral  
medicine)



Sometimes **medications**



Sometimes **bariatric surgery**

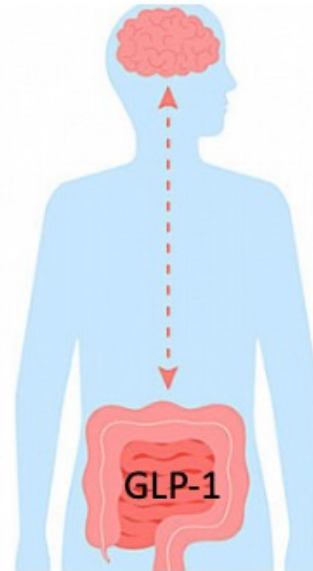


# Semaglutide for Weight Management (Wegovy, Ozempic)

The goal of treatment is weight loss  
for patients with a body mass index (BMI) > 95<sup>th</sup> percentile

## How does Semaglutide work?

- GLP-1 (Glucagon-like peptide-1) is a hormone produced by the intestines after meals that tells your brain and stomach when you've eaten enough.
- Semaglutide acts like GLP-1 to:
  - help your child feel less hungry.
  - slow down emptying of the stomach, to help your child feel satisfied longer after meals.
  - help improve the body's insulin response to reduce high blood sugar levels after eating.



## What are the risks?

- Semaglutide is usually well-tolerated by children and adolescents, but there can be side effects like:
  - Abdominal discomfort
  - nausea, vomitingThese are common at the beginning, but they usually go away after a few weeks.
- Rare side effects include gallstones, gallbladder inflammation, and acute pancreatitis, more commonly seen in adults with other health conditions.

## What to expect?

- Semaglutide is given by weekly injection under the skin (subcutaneous)
- We will prescribe the medication and you will pick it up from your local pharmacy
- Once you have your medication, please call 617-355-7476 to schedule a Nursing Visit to learn how to inject your medication.

### Contraindications:

- Family history of medullary thyroid cancer or a genetic syndrome called MEN2
- Personal history of pancreatitis



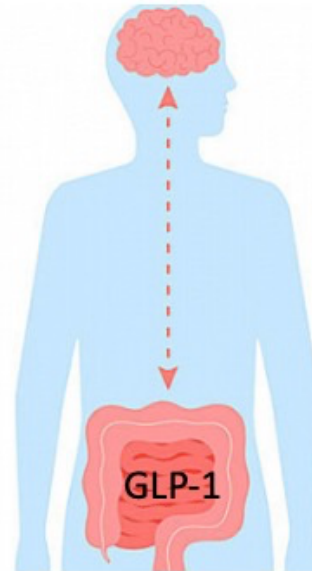


# Liraglutide for Weight Management (Saxenda, Victoza)

The goal of treatment is weight loss  
for patients with a body mass index (BMI) > 95<sup>th</sup> percentile

## How does Liraglutide work?

- GLP-1 (Glucagon-like peptide-1) is a hormone produced by the intestines after meals that tells your brain and stomach when you've eaten enough.
- Liraglutide acts like GLP-1 to:
  - help your child feel less hungry.
  - slow down emptying of the stomach, to help your child feel satisfied longer after meals.
  - help improve the body's insulin response to reduce high blood sugar levels after eating.



## What are the risks?

- Liraglutide is usually well-tolerated by children and adolescents, but there can be side effects like:
  - Abdominal discomfort
  - nausea, vomitingThese are common at the beginning, but they usually go away after a few weeks.
- Rare side effects include gallstones, gallbladder inflammation, and acute pancreatitis, more commonly seen in adults with other health conditions.

## What to expect?

- Liraglutide is given by daily injection under the skin (subcutaneous)
- We will prescribe the medication and you will pick it up from your local pharmacy
- Once you have your medication, please call 617-355-7476 to schedule a Nursing Visit to learn how to inject your medication.

### Contraindications:

- Family history of medullary thyroid cancer or a genetic syndrome called MEN2
- Personal history of pancreatitis

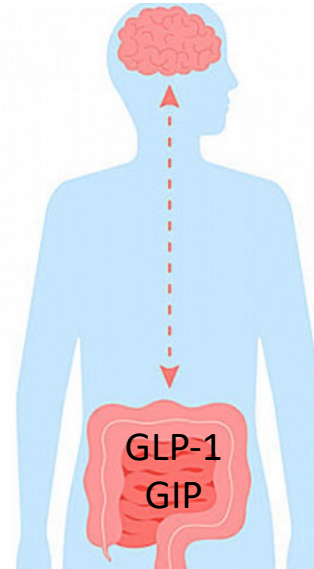


# Tirzepatide for Weight Management (Zepbound, Monjauro)

The goal of treatment is weight loss  
for patients with a body mass index (BMI) > 95<sup>th</sup> percentile

## How does Tirzepatide work?

- GLP-1 (Glucagon-like peptide-1) and GIP (Gastric inhibitory peptide) are hormones produced by the intestines after meals that tell your brain and stomach when you've eaten enough.
- Tirzepatide acts like both GLP-1 and GIP to:
  - help your child feel less hungry.
  - slow down emptying of the stomach, to help your child feel satisfied longer after meals.
  - help improve the body's insulin response to reduce high blood sugar levels after eating.



## What are the risks?

- Tirzepatide is usually well-tolerated by children and adolescents, but there can be side effects like:
  - Abdominal discomfort
  - nausea, vomitingThese are common at the beginning, but they usually go away after a few weeks.
- Rare side effects include gallstones, gallbladder inflammation, and acute pancreatitis, more commonly seen in adults with other health conditions.

## What to expect?

- Tirzepatide is given by weekly injection under the skin (subcutaneous)
- We will prescribe the medication and you will pick it up from your local pharmacy
- Once you have your medication, please call 617-355-7476 to schedule a Nursing Visit to learn how to inject your medication.

### **Contraindications:**

- Family history of medullary thyroid cancer or a genetic syndrome called MEN2
- Personal history of pancreatitis

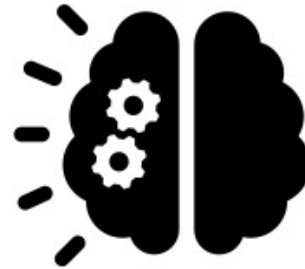


# Phentermine for Weight Management

The goal of treatment is to elicit weight loss  
for patients with a body mass index (BMI) > 95<sup>th</sup> percentile

## How does Phentermine work?

- Phentermine stimulates areas of the brain that register feelings of fullness in the brain. This helps to reduce hunger and to reduce body weight.



## What are the risks?

- Phentermine alone is not yet FDA-approved for pediatric obesity (i.e., <18yo), but has been shown in combination with topiramate to be safe and effective in children ages 12 and up.
- Possible side effects include:
  - Headache
  - High blood pressure
  - Dry mouth
  - Constipation
  - Difficulty sleeping
  - Gallstones
  - Acute glaucoma (rare)

## What to expect?

- Phentermine is medication taken by mouth once daily
- We will prescribe the medication and you will pick it up from your local pharmacy

### **Contraindications:**

- Uncontrolled high blood pressure
- History of heart disease
- Use of certain medications used for depression or certain other stimulant medications
- History of substance abuse
- Hyperthyroidism
- Uncontrolled anxiety
- Glaucoma



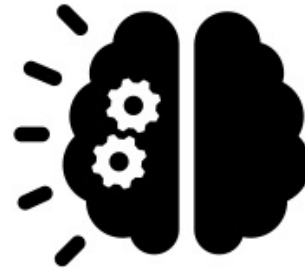


# Topiramate for Weight Management

The goal of treatment is to elicit weight loss  
for patients with a body mass index (BMI) > 95<sup>th</sup> percentile

## How does Topiramate work?

- Topiramate is traditionally used as an anti-seizure medication, but because it act in the brain can also work to help reduce appetite and control body weight



## What are the risks?

- Topiramate alone is not yet FDA approved for pediatric obesity (i.e., <18yo), but has been shown in combination with phentermine to be safe and effective in children ages 12 and up.
- Possible side effects include:
  - "Brain fog"
  - Acidosis
  - Gallstones
  - Kidney stones
  - Risk of overheating due reduced sweating
  - Certain EKG changes (long QT interval)

## What to expect?

- Topiramate is an medication taken by mouth once daily
- We will prescribe the medication and you will pick it up from your local pharmacy

### Contraindications:

- Kidney disease
- Use of the medication acetazolamide
- Problems with focusing in school
- Active suicidal ideation
- Plan to become pregnant (topiramate can be dangerous for baby)



## Nutrition

Standard 1  
Education



## HAND-OUT

# PAIR IT UP! SNACKS

## EAT "PAIRED" SNACKS WHEN HUNGRY BETWEEN MEALS

### What is a paired snack?

- A paired snack has 2 foods. Eating a paired snack can give you energy between meals.

### FIRST

# 1

Pick a **Low-** or **Moderate-**  
Glycemic Carbohydrate  
(Vegetable, Fruit, Beans,  
Whole Grain)

### NEXT

# 2

Pair it with a  
**Protein** or **Fat**

1 cup celery  
1 cup baby carrots  
1 sliced cucumber  
1 apple  
1 cup grapes  
2 clementines  
1 cup blueberries  
½ cup black beans

2 tablespoons dried fruit  
6 Triscuit® crackers

1 cup milk  
1 cup plain yogurt  
1 string cheese  
1 hard-boiled egg  
3 slices deli turkey/chicken breast

1 tablespoon peanut butter  
⅓ cup almonds  
2 tablespoons guacamole  
2 tablespoons hummus  
2 tablespoons ranch dressing

Note: When choosing a **Moderate-Glycemic Grain**  
(like Triscuit® crackers) pair it with a **Protein**  
(like string cheese).

APPLE + MILK

BLACK BEANS +  
GUACAMOLE

CELERY +  
PEANUT BUTTER

BABY CARROTS +  
RANCH DRESSING

STRING CHEESE  
TRISCUIT® CRACKERS

YOGURT +  
BLUEBERRIES

SLICED CUCUMBER



## Nutrition

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Education



## HAND-OUT

# BALANCING ACT! PLATE MODEL

## EAT "BALANCED" MEALS – FOLLOW A PLATE MODEL

### What is a balanced meal?

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are meals. A balanced meal has the right proportions of healthful foods to keep you feeling good.



### Example:





## Nutrition

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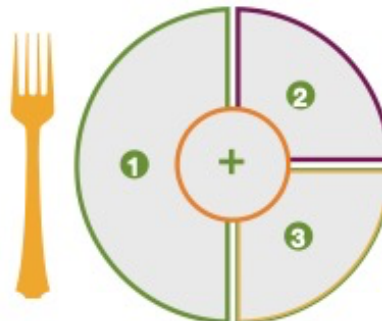


## HAND-OUT

# BALANCING ACT! FOOD CHOICES

A balanced plate has three parts. Think 1 – 2 – 3 +.

1. Vegetables and fruits are **green/go foods**.
  2. Protein foods are shown in **purple**.
  3. Choices:
    - Beans – **green/go foods**
    - Starchy vegetables and whole grains – **yellow/be careful foods** (watch portions carefully)
    - Some starchy vegetables and grains – **red/stop and think foods** (not the best choices)
- + Add **fat**.



## Food Choice Lists

1. Green/Go Foods			
Non-Starchy Vegetables		Fruits	
Broccoli	Mushrooms	Apple	Pear
Carrots	Peppers	Berries	Peach
Cucumber	Spinach	Clementine	Plum
2. Protein Foods			
Cheese	Egg	Tofu	Turkey ham
Chicken	Fish	Turkey	Yogurt, plain/greek, unsweetened
3. Green/Go Foods or Yellow/Be Careful Foods			
Beans			
Black beans	Edamame	Kidney beans	Pinto beans
Cannellini beans	Garbanzo beans	Lentils	Refried beans
Starchy Vegetables		Whole Grains	
Butternut squash	Green peas	Brown rice	Whole grain bread
Beets	Sweet potato	High-fiber/low-sugar breakfast cereal	Whole grain crackers
Red/Stop and Think Foods			
Starchy Vegetables		Grains	
Fingerling potatoes	Mashed potato	Breakfast cereal (most kinds)	White bread
French fries	White potato	Crackers (most kinds)	White rice
+ Fat			
Avocado/guacamole	Cream cheese	Nuts	Peanut butter
Buttery spreads	Italian dressing	Oil (vegetable, olive)	Seeds

You can probably think of more choices!





## Nutrition

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## HAND-OUT

# STOP AND THINK BEFORE YOU DRINK!

## STOP AND THINK BEFORE YOU DRINK SUGARY BEVERAGES — DRINK WATER INSTEAD

### Did you know...



#### Energy Crash

...sugary beverages can decrease your energy level?

Drinking sugary beverages causes a blood sugar roller coaster – a fast increase in blood sugar, followed by a blood sugar crash. When blood sugar crashes, you may feel cranky, sleepy, and hungry.



#### False Advertising

...labels and advertisements often are confusing?

Beverage companies do all kinds of things to attract your attention to their products. They bombard you with many confusing labels and advertisements for sugary beverages. Don't be confused by labels and advertisements!



#### Weight Gain

...sugary beverages can cause weight gain?

Sugary beverages have about 150 calories per can. Drinking 1 sugary beverage per day for a year could cause as much as 15 extra pounds of weight gain.



#### Too Many Calories

...it takes a lot of exercise to burn off calories in sugary beverages?

Sugary beverages contain lots of calories. To burn the calories in just 1 can (12 fluid ounces) of soda, you would have to run 1.75 miles, assuming that you burn about 85 calories per mile!



#### Tooth Decay

...drinking sugary beverages can damage your teeth?

Drinking sugary beverages can damage your teeth. When bacteria in your mouth react to sugar, acids are formed. These acids can destroy the tooth enamel, causing cavities.

#### Water Is Essential

Did you know you need water to stay alive?

Your body is more than half water. Water does much more than satisfy thirst. In fact, every cell, tissue, and organ in your body needs water! You cannot survive without it.





## Nutrition

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## HAND-OUT

# STAY OFF THE ROLLER COASTER!



## TASTE TEST

## THE WAY YOU EAT MATTERS

- Rub the salt off a saltine cracker
- Take a big bite of the cracker. Let it sit on your tongue for a few minutes
- What happens? Saliva, or spit, breaks down a nutrient called carbohydrate in the cracker

Carbohydrates, or carbs for short, are in many foods. Carbs break down into sugar. The sugar goes into the blood and travels throughout the body.

Carbs in food, such as saltine crackers, that break down to sugar quickly are called **High-Glycemic** (say: gli-SEE-mik) **Carbs**. The problem with **High-Glycemic Carbs** is that blood sugar goes up and down too fast.

The **low-glycemic** way of eating is all about choosing **Low-Glycemic Carbs** rather than **High-Glycemic Carbs**. **Low-Glycemic Carbs** give you slow and steady energy.

## Blood Sugar Roller Coaster



You also get energy from proteins—like fish, chicken, and meat—and from fats—like olive oil and nuts. Combining **Low-Glycemic Carbs** with protein and fat can help you feel fuller longer. These foods do not turn into sugar directly.

Types of Carbs	Effects on Blood Sugar	What Happens in Your Body
<b>Low-Glycemic Carbs</b> <b>Examples:</b> Green vegetables Fruits, like apples and berries Beans	Slow and Steady	Instead of having roller coaster highs and lows, you <b>have steady blood sugar levels</b> . That means you can focus better on schoolwork and have more energy to play sports and do other things you enjoy.
<b>High-Glycemic Carbs</b> <b>Examples:</b> French fries Brownies Sugary drinks	Highs and Lows	You may get a lot of energy right away, but then your blood sugar <b>crashes</b> . When your blood sugar drops too low, you may feel cranky, sleepy, or hungry.



## Sedentary Time

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## HAND-OUT

# STRATEGIES TO REDUCE SEDENTARY TIME

## LIMIT SITTING-AROUND TIME WHENEVER POSSIBLE

There are many things you can do to limit sitting-around time. Explore some Sitting Stopper Strategies!

Active Recreation	Lifestyle Activity	Active Transportation	Active Breaks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go to a playground</li> <li>Hike</li> <li>Participate in sports: tennis, basketball, baseball, volleyball, others</li> <li>Walk with friends</li> <li>Visit parks, museums, and historical sites</li> <li>Ride a bike</li> <li>Try horseback riding</li> <li>Visit a beach or pool for swimming or water play</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean your room</li> <li>Garden or do yard work</li> <li>Wash the car</li> <li>Rake leaves</li> <li>Carry groceries</li> <li>Mow the lawn</li> <li>Shovel snow</li> <li>Take out the trash</li> <li>Mop the floor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walk to the store</li> <li>Bike to school</li> <li>Skateboard to the library</li> <li>Climb the stairs</li> <li>Jog to a friend's place</li> <li>Rollerblade to the park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stand up</li> <li>Stretch</li> <li>Jog or march in place</li> <li>Take a walk</li> <li>Dance</li> <li>Go up and down the stairs</li> <li>Play an active video game</li> <li>Exercise with an exercise video</li> </ul>

## LIMIT ENTERTAINMENT SCREEN TIME TO NO MORE THAN 1 OR 2 HOURS PER DAY

A Turn Off Plan is important for limiting entertainment screen time. This is especially important during weekends, holidays, and school vacations when you have more free time. Explore some Turn Off Strategies!

	<b>Make a daily or weekly screen time schedule.</b> Plan when you will allow yourself entertainment screen time. Keep within the recommended time limit!
	<b>Set a timer to limit how much time you spend in front of a screen.</b> Once the timer goes off, get up and do something else: learn, play, create!
	<b>Plan a non-food reward for powering down electronic devices.</b> For example, I will only play my favorite video game for 30 minutes. Then I will go outside for a walk with my friend.
	<b>Sign up for a sports league, dance/exercise class, or hiking club.</b> It is easier to step away from the screen when you have to be somewhere at a certain time.
	<b>Write a list of screen-free activities.</b> Keep this list in a visible place. Maybe right next to any electronic media! You will be more likely to do something else if you have thought of options ahead of time.
	<b>Turn commercial breaks into active breaks.</b> Do quick bursts of high-intensity exercises like jumping jacks, push-ups, high knees, or squats. These require no equipment and you may be able to do them in the same room as your TV.
	<b>Be aware.</b> If you find yourself staring blankly at the TV or screen, ask yourself how long you've been there. You may be surprised at how much time slipped away! Time to go find other things you enjoy.
	<b>Put your cell phone where you can't see it.</b> When not using your phone, put it in a drawer or another place where it is hidden from sight. Then you won't be so tempted to use it.





## Personalized Worksheet

### EMPOWER Orientation/Nutrition Intro group visit:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Patient's appointments:

- First medical follow-up appointment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

- Second medical follow-up appointment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

- Third medical follow-up appointment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

- Fourth medical follow-up appointment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

### Nutrition classes/visits:

1. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Date: \_\_\_\_\_





## **Starting on Weight Management Medications**

### ***What is the process required prior to starting on treatment?***

1. Your provider will provide a prescription and will ask the office to begin a process called *prior authorization*, which is a request for the insurance company to cover the medication.
  - A single PA can take up to 7 business days, and I may not hear from the team regarding a decision for 7-10 days.
  - In most instances a maximum 2 PAs will be sent by our office. We have found that, in general, insurance plans will either cover most weight management medications or will not cover any of these medications.
  - We generally will not send PAs intended to cover a different medication during a short-term supply issue.
2. Call your pharmacy to find out if the medication is in stock.
  - Presently, most of the medications are in short supply and many pharmacies may only receive a small amount of the medication per month. As a result, you may need to call several pharmacies to find one that has your prescribed medication in stock. Our office unfortunately does not have the capacity to do this on behalf of patients.
  - Due to these supply issues, please understand that you may need to wait several weeks (sometimes even months) to start the medication. We are hoping that this situation improves in the near future.
  - If you are having persistent difficulties, please contact your medical team.
3. When you have the medication in hand, please call our office at 617-355-7476 to schedule a nurse visit to learn how to inject the medication (only applicable to injectable medications).
4. Take all medications as prescribed. Let the treatment team know as soon as possible if:
  - You/your child runs out of medications or needs a refill before their next scheduled appointment.
  - You/your child patient has side effects that may be from their medications, which limit their ability to take the medications as prescribed or participate as usual in activities of daily living (e.g., school, work, sports, eating regular meals, etc.).

### ***What can I do to speed up the process?***

1. Contact my insurance company to inquire about coverage for the following medications:
  - a. Zepbound
  - b. Wegovy
  - c. Saxenda
  - d. Monjauro (ask whether coverage requires diagnosis of diabetes)
  - e. Ozempic (ask whether coverage requires diagnosis of diabetes)
  - f. Liraglutide (ask whether coverage requires diagnosis of diabetes)
  - g. Phentermine
  - h. Topiramate



- i. Qsymia
2. Contact many different pharmacies to find one that has your prescribed medication in stock. Supply at any one pharmacy could change on a day-to-day basis.

***Once I start on medication, how should I request refills?***

- Medication refills will be provided in the context of your medical visits, which will occur at least quarterly. The treatment team will generally provide enough medication refills to get a patient to their next medical visit.
  - If the patient misses an appointment, it may need to be rescheduled (virtual or in person) prior to receiving any medication refills.
  - Understand that MyChart's messages will be reviewed and responded to once every 24 hours, and prescriptions cannot be sent in real-time.



## An Important Message About Safe Medication Use

We are committed to your health and safety and want to make patients and families aware of a few important things:

- ***You may have heard that medications for weight management are often in short supply, especially for newer medications like semaglutide or tirzepatide.*** As a result, many companies are selling obesity medications directly to consumers. What is important to know is that many times these websites are selling versions of medications which are not FDA-approved. This is often true even if endorsed by medical doctors.
  - ***Many of these drugs contain a chemical that is marketed as similar to drugs like Wegovy or Zepbound, but these are not the same as the brand-name medications that are FDA-approved.*** These medications may not be the same product and therefore may have different side effects and risks. These medications also may be mixed in a way that alters their safety and/or efficacy, and could contain toxic ingredients.
  - ***Buying medications online is risky, and the only way to ensure that you are getting genuine FDA-approved medication is to have your physician send a prescription to a licensed pharmacy.*** If you have any questions or are worried about cost, please talk to your medical team- we are here to help!
  - ***Genuine semaglutide, liraglutide or tirzepatide will only ever be dispensed in a pen.*** If you receive a vial of any of these medications, be aware that this is not an FDA-approved formulation. When in doubt, bring your medications with you to your appointment or send us a photo in the portal!
    - *An exception is a newer, out-of-pocket (i.e., not covered by insurance) formulation of certain doses of tirzepatide sold by Eli Lilly. This is a newer option and we generally prefer to prescribe medications covered by insurance.*
  - ***Importantly, this is very different from taking generic medications, which are approved by the FDA.*** We hope that generic forms of semaglutide, tirzepatide and liraglutide will be available in the near future and may help to reduce the burden of co-pays and insurance paperwork.
  - ***What does it mean to be FDA-approved?*** Medications that are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have undergone extensive testing in human patients and are backed by extensive safety data.
- ***During your time in our program, your medical provider may discuss with you medication options for weight management that are “off-label.”*** Some medications are FDA-approved for a particular disease, meaning that these medications have been rigorously tested in a particular age group and have received approval by the FDA for this indication. Other times, your physician may discuss with you the option to use an FDA-approved medication in an “off-label” manner. This means that although the medication has been studied and tested, it may not be approved for use in a particular age group or for a certain disease. Whether or not to use medication in this way should be a discussion between you and your medical team. However, this practice is very different from using compounded medications because all of these drugs have been approved by the FDA for use in humans and have safety data from clinical studies.
- Find more information here:
  - <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/postmarket-drug-safety-information-patients-and-providers/medications-containing-semaglutide-marketed-type-2-diabetes-or-weight-loss>
  - <https://obesitymedicine.org/blog/obesity-medicine-association-issues-a-position-statement-on-compounded-peptides/>



## Managing Medication Side Effects

### 1. Eating habits



### 2. Food composition

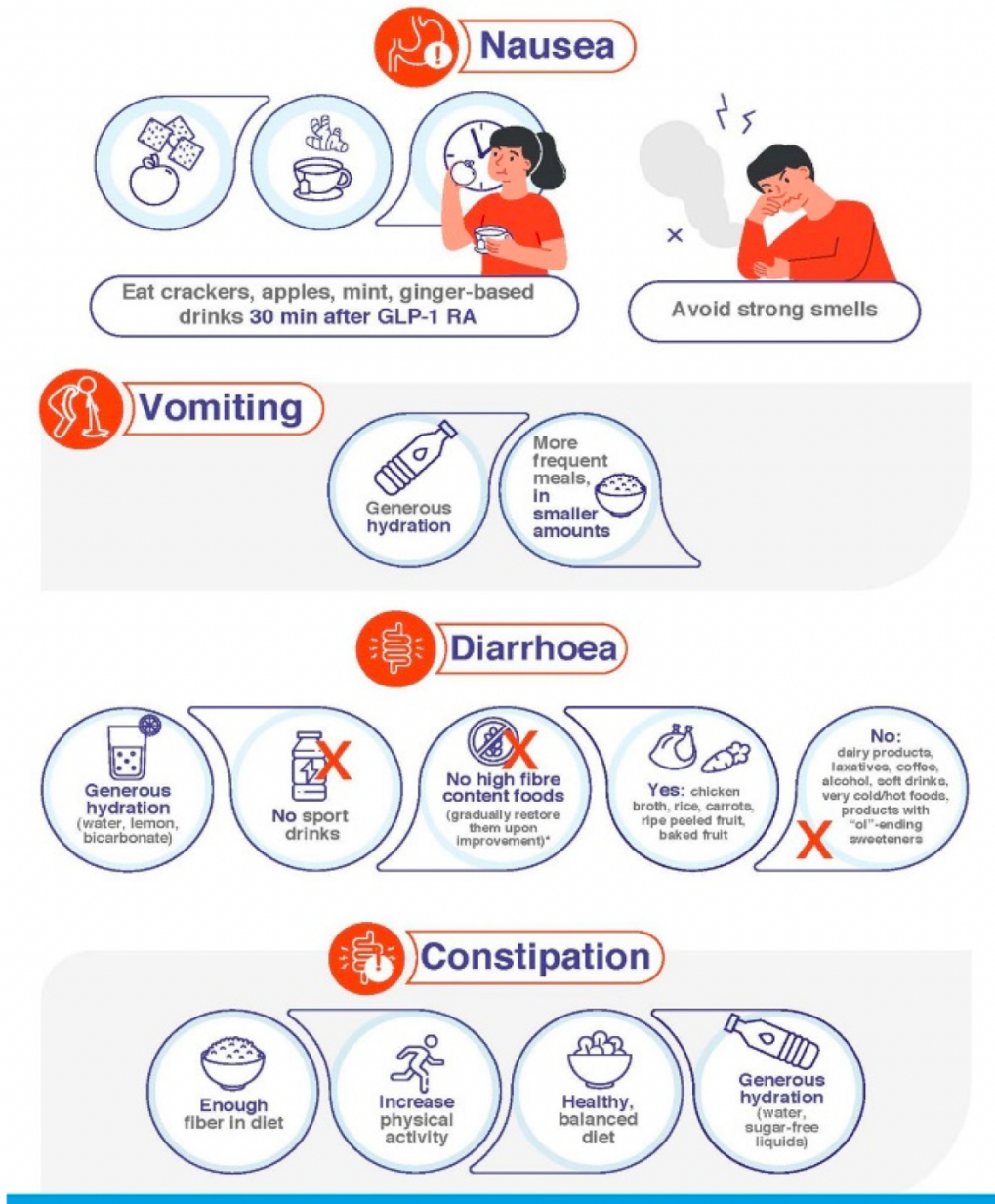


### 3. Lifestyle



Tips to avoid GI side effects (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach upset) while on GLP-1RA medications like Wegovy, Saxenda or Zepbound  
(From Gorgojo-Martínez *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 2022.)





Managing GI side effects (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach upset) while on GLP-1RA medications like Wegovy, Saxenda or Zepbound. NOTE for any severe abdominal pain, persistent vomiting, or any symptoms that impair ability to eat and drink normally, please contact your medical team as soon as possible.

(From Gorgojo-Martínez *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 2022.)



## Important contacts

### **Boston Children's Hospital EMPOWER Program**

Phone: 617-355-5159

<https://www.childrenshospital.org/programs/empower>

### **Boston Children's Hospital Adolescent Bariatric Surgery Program**

<https://www.childrenshospital.org/programs/adolescent-weight-loss-bariatric-surgery-program>

Phone: 617-355-2458

### **Boston Children's Hospital Strategies for Teen Empowerment and Physical Health (STEP) Program**

<https://www.childrenshospital.org/programs/step-program>

Phone: 617-355-7181

### **Boston Children's Hospital Preventative Cardiology Program**

[www.childrenshospital.org/departments/cardiology](http://www.childrenshospital.org/departments/cardiology)

Phone: 617-738-6289

### **Boston Children's Hospital Fatty Liver Interdisciplinary Program (FLIP)**

<https://www.childrenshospital.org/programs/fatty-liver-interdisciplinary-program>

Phone: 617-355-5837

### **Boston Children's Hospital Sleep Medicine Clinic**

[www.childrenshospital.org/programs/sleep-center](http://www.childrenshospital.org/programs/sleep-center)

Phone: 617-216-2570