**Access to weight loss drugs in West Yorkshire**

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Many health conditions are associated with obesity including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure (hypertension), cardiovascular disease, stroke and some types of cancer such as breast cancer and bowel cancer. Living with obesity can also affect a person’s quality of life and contribute to mental health problems such as depression.

The drug semaglutide, brand name Wegovy, is a prescription medicine that can increase feelings of fullness, reduce hunger and reduce the desire for high-fat foods. Used alongside healthy eating and physical activity, semaglutide may help people with obesity lose weight and reduce the risk of developing or worsening associated health conditions.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has issued guidance around the use of semaglutide for managing overweight and obesity to help some people with a very high BMI (body mass index) lose weight. In line with this guidance, semaglutide will **only** be available in West Yorkshire through specialist weight management services.

The introduction of semaglutide is increasing demand on these services. Although we are working to increase capacity where possible, we are planning a phased approach to make sure that people with the greatest clinical need are prioritised for access to semaglutide. This will help specialist weight management services deal with the initial high demand for semaglutide. This arrangement will be reviewed in no more than one year.

**Who will be able to get semaglutide?**

The priority groups for access to semaglutide via specialist weight management services will be in the following order:

1. People with a BMI of 45 or above with **at least one** health condition that is associated with obesity or who need to lose weight in order to receive time critical surgery or healthcare treatment.

2. People with a BMI of 40 to 44.9 with **at least one** health condition associated with obesity.

3. People with a BMI of 37.5 to 39.9 with **at least one** health condition associated with obesity.

4. People with a BMI of 35 to 37.4 with **at least one** health condition associated with obesity.

For people with South Asian, Chinese, other Asian, Middle Eastern, Black African or African-Caribbean family backgrounds, the BMI ranges will be as detailed in the following priority groups. People with these ethnic family backgrounds have an equivalent risk of complications of obesity at a lower BMI than people from a White ethnic family background. For this reason, the BMI levels are reduced by 2.5 in accordance with Clinical Guideline CG189.

1. People with a BMI of 42.5 or above with **at least one** health condition that is associated with obesity or who need to lose weight in order to receive time critical surgery or healthcare treatment.

2. People with a BMI of 37.5 to 42.4 with **at least one** health condition associated with obesity.

3. People with a BMI of 35 to 37.4 with **at least one** health condition associated with obesity.

4. People with a BMI of 32.5 to 34.9 with **at least one** health condition associated with obesity.

Because priority for treatment is based on BMI, people may not been seen in the same order that they are referred to a specialist weight management service. For example, someone with a BMI of 45 could be prioritised for treatment above someone with a BMI of 35, even if the person with a BMI of 35 had been referred for treatment first.

**How long will treatment last?**

Treatment may be limited to one year after the optimal dosage of semaglutide for that patient has been reached. Whilst NICE guidance suggests treatment may last up to two years, most clinical studies have been for one year of using the drug. Limiting treatment to one year will mean that more people are able to benefit from using semaglutide during the first few years of it being available.

**Where can I find further information?**

The Department of Health and Social Care has developed this blog for patients Accessing Wegovy for weight loss: Everything you need to know. It explains that currently, people can only access treatment via specialist weight management services and not via their GP. The following information may also be helpful for people living with overweight and obesity:

* NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme
* NHS Type 2 Diabetes Path to Remission Programme
* The NHS Digital Weight Management Programme
* NHS Better Health – weight loss plan
* FIT FANS – free health programme for people aged 35-65 who are looking to lose weight, get fitter and lead a more active life

If you have any questions or comments about this information, please contact westyorkshire.ICS@nhs.net