

The Ozempic Effect: Beauty Standards, Health, and Ethics

The growing normalisation of obesity drugs is sparking controversy about quick fixes, societal expectations and what it truly means to address health issues in a world driven by short cuts. Most notably, the drug “Ozempic” has risen to fame as tech moguls and TikTok influencers alike have consumed it. These drugs, like Ozempic and Wegovy, are both GLP-1 receptor agonists, a class of anorectic drugs that reduce blood sugar and energy intake by activating the GLP-1 receptor. These work by affecting the brain's hunger signals, reducing appetite and slowing down the process of gastric emptying.

The Role of Celebrity Influence

Celebrity endorsements of drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy, have propelled them into mainstream popularity. The biological mechanism of GLP-1 drugs works by mimicking a hormone called glucagon-like peptide-1, which helps to slow gastric emptying, increase feelings of fullness, and suppress appetite. Celebrities publicly using these drugs have highlighted their effectiveness, with Kim Kardashian’s rapid weight loss for the Met Gala being a prime example. Kim Kardashian’s transformation to fit into Marilyn Monroe’s iconic dress at the 2022 Met Gala underscores how far people will go to meet society’s narrow beauty standards, with many risking their health in a desperate bid to conform to an idealized image, as if wearing a dress or achieving a certain look defines their worth. This has led to a cultural shift where medical treatments for obesity are not only seen as medically acceptable but also as aspirational, with celebrities endorsing the results rather than the process.

The Risks of a “Quick-Fix” Mentality

However, this trend is not without its risks. The biological effects of these medications are profound, influencing hormonal balance, appetite control, and gastric motility, but their widespread use can also foster a “quick-fix” mentality. As these medications offer quick weight loss, they may inadvertently promote a mindset where food becomes less of a nourishment source and more of a battleground for control, possibly leading to disordered eating habits. People may detach from healthy, routine eating habits and rely on medication to fuel their bodies.

Additionally, the growing societal pressure to conform to rigid beauty standards exacerbates the “quick fix” mentality, with many feeling that taking these drugs is the only way to meet societal expectations. The idea that beauty equals worth becomes reinforced, leading to a situation where individuals might feel judged or even ostracised for not using medications to achieve weight loss.

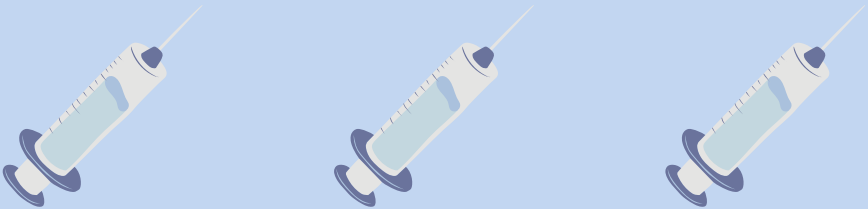
Balancing Effectiveness with Ethical Concerns

Clinical studies have demonstrated the remarkable efficiency of weight loss drugs like Ozempic, with some users losing up to 20% of their body weight, a significant achievement for those struggling with issues like obesity and diabetes. However, the side effects of these drugs can be and should be viewed as a concern to people all around the world. Some side effects include symptoms such as nausea, digestive issues and vomiting as the body adjusts to the slowing down of digestive processes, acting as a significant threat to healthy, holistic lifestyles across all ages. There are concerns about the safety of prolonged use of these drugs, including gut health and metabolic function.

The Role of the Pharmaceutical Industry

Meanwhile, pharmaceutical companies are capitalising on the soaring demand, rebranding these drugs as lifestyle aids rather than medical treatments. By marketing them as effortless weight-loss solutions, they mask broader public health issues—prioritising profit over addressing the root causes of obesity. This commodification of weight loss risks turning a complex health challenge into a marketable trend, leaving deeper societal concerns unaddressed.

As obesity drugs continue to gain traction, it is crucial to balance medical innovation with ethical considerations. While these medications offer life-changing benefits for some, their normalisation as a beauty tool rather than a medical necessity could have far-reaching consequences for public health, self-image, and the broader perception of weight management.



ARYANA PUTCHA

CITATIONS

Guglielmi, Giorgia. “The Weight-Loss Drugs Being Tested in 2025: Will They Beat Ozempic?” *Nature*, 6 Feb. 2025, www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00376-w, <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-025-00376-w>.

Guglielmi, Giorgia. “Obesity Drugs: Huge Study Highlights New Health Risks.” *Nature*, 20 Jan. 2025, www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00173-5?utm_source=Live+Audience&utm_campaign=43960926ef-nature-briefing-daily-20250121&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_b27a691814-43960926ef-499071380, <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-025-00173-5>.