

Weight loss drug Wegovy to be subsidised for Australians

Wegovy, a higher-dose form of the medication semaglutide (the same active ingredient used in Ozempic), is expected to be listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for adults with obesity and cardiovascular disease.

Health Minister Mark Butler has committed to listing Wegovy on the PBS for people who have had a heart attack or stroke, or people with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 35 or higher, as recommended by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) late last year.

Semaglutide belongs to a class of medicines known as glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists, which are commonly used to help people manage type 2 diabetes and, at higher doses support weight management.

While there is currently no confirmed timeline for when Wegovy will be listed on the PBS, Diabetes Victoria CEO Glen Noonan welcomed the commitment.

“While many factors affect a person’s risk of developing type 2 diabetes, and not all can be changed, supporting people who want to lose weight can help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes,” Mr Noonan says.

“In the last 10 years, the number of people living with type 2 diabetes in Victoria aged 21-40 has increased by 49%.

“Over time, diabetes can lead to serious long-term complications, affecting the kidneys, eyes, feet, and heart, and it can increase the risk of dementia and cancer.

“Making weight loss medicines more affordable is critical to reducing the impact of type 2 diabetes.”

Once Wegovy is listed on the PBS, the price will be dramatically reduced for eligible people.

Health Minister Mark Butler says more than 400,000 Australians are currently spending as much as \$4000 or \$5000 a year on weight loss medications.

“It’s beyond the means of many Australians who would benefit from this,” he says. “It’s an equity issue as well as a health issue.”



GLP-1 medicines work best when combined with healthy eating, regular physical activity, and appropriate medical support. They are not suitable for everyone, and Diabetes Victoria recommends ongoing guidance from health professionals before and during treatment.

Diabetes Victoria supports people using GLP-1 medicines through access to accredited practising dietitians and diabetes nurse educators.

Always seek the advice of your doctor or healthcare team if you have questions or concerns about your diabetes management.

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