A THRYVWELL HEALTH GUIDE FOR PARENTS

The Parent's Guide to GLP-1 Treatment for Teens

What GLP-1 medications are, how they work, whether they're safe for adolescents, and the questions every parent should ask — in plain language, grounded in clinical evidence.

Thryvwell

Board-Certified Physicians · FDA-Approved Medications Only · HIPAA Compliant

IN THIS GUIDE

1. What are GLP-1 medications?

GLP-1 medications are a class of drugs that mimic a natural hormone your child's body already produces called glucagon-like peptide-1. This hormone plays a key role in telling the brain "I'm full," slowing down how fast food leaves the stomach, and helping regulate blood sugar.

Originally developed for type 2 diabetes, researchers discovered these medications also help with significant, sustained weight loss. For adolescents with obesity, they represent a clinically proven tool that works alongside healthy lifestyle changes.

It is important to understand that these medications are not a cure for obesity on their own. They work best as part of a comprehensive approach that includes healthy eating habits, regular physical activity, restful sleep, behavioral support, and long-term lifestyle changes.

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2. Which medications are approved for adolescents?

Two GLP-1 medications are currently FDA-approved for adolescents aged 12 and older. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends considering these medications as part of comprehensive treatment, particularly when obesity is accompanied by related medical conditions.

Wegovy® (semaglutide)

Once weekly

A once-weekly injection approved for adolescents aged 12+ with obesity. Supported by the STEP TEENS clinical trial, which demonstrated an average 16% reduction in BMI over 68 weeks.

Saxenda® (liraglutide)

Daily

A daily injection approved for adolescents aged 12+ with obesity. Clinical studies showed approximately 5% BMI reduction over 56 weeks when combined with lifestyle changes.

Zepbound® (tirzepatide)

Not yet approved for under 18

A once-weekly dual GIP/GLP-1 receptor agonist. While showing promise in adult studies, it is not yet FDA-approved for patients under 18. Pediatric trials are ongoing.

A note on compounded medications

At Thryvwell, we only prescribe FDA-approved, brand-name GLP-1 medications. We never use compounded versions, which lack the rigorous safety testing, quality controls, and clinical trial data that FDA-approved drugs undergo. Your child's safety is non-negotiable.

3. How do they work?

GLP-1 medications work through multiple pathways: regulating appetite in the brain, slowing gastric emptying, stabilizing blood sugar, and reducing fat accumulation in the liver. Clinical studies show adolescents can achieve 5–16% BMI reduction when combined with lifestyle changes.

16.1%

Average BMI reduction with semaglutide over 68 weeks (STEP TEENS, NEJM 2022)

73%

Of adolescents on semaglutide achieved ≥5% BMI reduction

37%

Achieved ≥20% BMI reduction — a life-changing outcome

4. Are they safe for teenagers?

These medications have been studied specifically in adolescent populations and are generally safe when prescribed and monitored by qualified clinicians. Common side effects (nausea, stomach discomfort) are usually mild and improve with gradual dose titration.

The full safety picture includes known side effects, monitoring protocols, and long-term data — all of which your prescribing clinician should walk you through before treatment begins. At Thryvwell, safety monitoring is built into every stage of care, with regular check-ins and clear guidance on what to watch for.

5. Why supervised care matters

A prescription alone isn't treatment. Research shows that combining GLP-1 medication with a structured weight management program is significantly more effective than medication alone because it addresses both the biological and behavioral aspects of weight management. Adolescent bodies are still developing, and without proper clinical oversight, treatment can lead to muscle loss, weight regain, and pronounced side effects.

A comprehensive program includes:

- **Medical supervision:** Regular follow-up to monitor weight, blood pressure, blood sugar (if applicable), medication response, and side effects.
- **Personalized nutrition counseling:** A qualified healthcare professional helps create an eating plan that emphasizes adequate protein, fiber, hydration, and sustainable calorie reduction.
- **Physical activity plan:** A gradual exercise program that combines aerobic activity with strength training to help preserve muscle mass during weight loss.
- **Behavioral support:** Coaching, counseling, or cognitive behavioral strategies to build healthy habits, improve sleep, manage stress, and address emotional eating.
- **Ongoing monitoring:** Regular check-ins, food and activity tracking, and progress reviews to help maintain motivation and identify barriers early.

Maintaining healthy eating habits and regular physical activity is also important if medication is stopped, as weight regain is common without continued lifestyle support.

6. What about nutrition?

Because GLP-1 medications reduce appetite, ensuring your child gets adequate nutrition requires active attention. Protein intake, hydration, and regular meals become more important, not less, during treatment.

A structured program pairs medication with age-appropriate nutrition guidance so your child loses fat — not muscle, energy, or momentum through the growth years.

7. What if we want to stop the medication?

Weight regain can occur when GLP-1 medications are discontinued, which is why a thoughtful transition plan (gradual dose reduction, intensified lifestyle support, and more frequent check-ins) is essential.

Ask any program you consider how they handle the "off-ramp" — a plan for stopping should exist before treatment ever starts.

8. Questions to ask your provider

Whether you are considering Thryvwell or exploring other options, here are questions you should ask your child's pediatrician:

1. Is my child a good candidate for GLP-1 medication based on their BMI percentile?
2. Which medication do you recommend, and why?
3. What side effects should we watch for, and when should we call?
4. How will you monitor my child's growth, nutrition, and development during treatment?
5. Does our insurance cover this medication, and what are the out-of-pocket costs?
6. What lifestyle changes need to happen alongside the medication?
7. How long would treatment last, and what does the off-ramp look like?
8. What support is available for our whole family during this process?

9. A note on obesity as a medical condition

Obesity is recognized by the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the World Health Organization as a chronic disease that often begins in childhood. It is influenced by genetics, environment, hormones, and many factors beyond personal willpower.

> "Treatment should be about improving health and quality of life. Your child's worth has nothing to do with their weight."
>
> — Thryvwell Care Philosophy

At Thryvwell, we approach every family with compassion, free from judgment or stigma. With proper GLP-1 treatment, alongside lifestyle changes and behavioral support, children and adolescents can achieve meaningful improvements in their health, confidence, and long-term wellbeing.

Ready to see if your child qualifies?

Our eligibility screener takes less than 2 minutes. No commitment required.

thryvwellhealth.com/eligibility