

Eli Lilly starts website to connect patients with new obesity treatment, Zepbound, other drugs

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A sign for Eli Lilly & Co. stands outside their corporate headquarters in Indianapolis on April 26, 2017. Eli Lilly has launched a unique website to connect U.S. patients seeking obesity treatment to doctors, dieticians and its new weight-loss drug, Zepbound. The drugmaker said Thursday, Jan 4, 2024, it will use the site, called LillyDirect, to pair visitors with third-party mail-order pharmacies for prescriptions and to care providers through a virtual medical

weight-loss clinic. (AP Photo/Darron Cummings, File) Credit: AP Photo/Darron Cummings, File

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The site also offers a directory for in-person care and help with insulins and migraine treatments.

Lilly says the doctors connected through the website are independent and not paid to promote its products, and the drugmaker also isn't paid to send referrals to them.

In November, U.S. regulators approved Zepbound, a version of the popular diabetes treatment Mounjaro, to be used as a weight-loss treatment. The [drug](#) joins Novo Nordisk's Wegovy in [a hot field for care](#), chronic weight management.

At least 100 million adults are considered obese in the United States.

Indianapolis-based Lilly started its site to eliminate some of the complexity in the U.S. health care system that people face when they manage a chronic disease, Lilly CEO David Ricks said in a statement.

Drugmakers frequently offer coupons for their drugs or other help getting prescriptions, said Caitlin Donovan, a senior director for the non-

profit Patient Advocate Foundation, which helps patients deal with serious or chronic health problems.

Pairing that prescription help with access to doctors in one location is unique, she added.

"Anything that's going to streamline any type of process is good because we have the least streamlined health care system in the world," Donovan said.

Telemedicine grew popular during the COVID-19 pandemic, and more companies have started offering virtual help directly to consumers for specific conditions, often through subscription plans. This trend has drawn concern from some doctors who see it simply as a push to sell more drugs.

Lilly says the care providers available through LillyDirect will use their own judgment in deciding treatment, and that may not include medication use.

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