

'Budget Ozempic': Five ways this dangerous TikTok weight loss trend will harm your health

March 7 2024, by Swrajit Sarkar



Credit: Markus Winkler from Pexels

Social media is obsessed with the [type 2 diabetes drug](#) Ozempic. But Ozempic's ability to control blood sugar isn't the reason it's so popular

online. Instead, the drug is trending because it has been shown in [clinical trials](#) to cause weight loss in diabetic patients taking it.

This has led to an uptick in the number of people trying to get their hands on Ozempic in the hopes of losing weight—even though the Ozempic is [not recommended for weight loss](#). The drug's soaring popularity online has not only contributed to shortages and [bootleg versions](#) of the drug, it's also led to an influx of harmful diet trends.

One of these diet trends circulating on [social media](#) is what some have dubbed "Budget Ozempic." Budget Ozempic is in fact not at all related to Ozempic, nor does it contain semaglutide—the drug component which is the active ingredient in Ozempic. In most cases, what people online are calling "budget Ozempic," actually refers to [laxatives](#) and stool softeners.

There are many reasons why you should avoid using "budget Ozempic" if you're trying to lose weight—least of which is because they only have a small, short-term effect on weight loss. Laxatives and stool softeners are not designed to be used long-term, nor are they indicated for weight loss. Using them improperly can be harmful for many reasons.

Dehydration

Some types of laxatives work by bringing water from elsewhere in the body into the intestines in order to soften the stool and make it easier to pass. But abuse of laxatives and stool softeners can lead to [water loss](#) and dehydration. This may lead to short-term symptoms such as feeling more tired or thirsty than usual, as well as dizziness and lightheadedness.

Water loss can also trigger the body's [renin-angiotensin response](#). The key function of this response is to keep fluids and blood pressure balanced. If too much water is lost in a short period of time, it will

eventually cause fluid retention. This temporary [fluid retention](#) happens due to your body overcompensating for the dehydration. Chronic dehydration may lead to [hypertension](#) and other [cardiovascular problems](#).

But while laxative use causes water loss, it does not lead to fat loss. This means that any weight a person loses from using laxatives is only temporary—and any water lost will be regained.

Electrolyte imbalance

Using laxatives irresponsibly may also cause you to lose electrolytes.

Electrolytes (such as sodium, potassium and chloride) are essential for the body to function. They help to balance your fluid levels and keep your muscles and [nervous system working](#). But when our body loses water or we become dehydrated, our body's electrolyte balance is thrown out of whack.

In the short-term, electrolyte imbalance can cause muscle cramps and spasm, nausea, fatigue, headaches and even numbness in the limbs. But chronic, long-term electrolyte imbalance can be more dangerous—increasing risk of [heart problems](#).

Poor nutrient intake

Our body requires many nutrients in order to function properly—including vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates and protein. These nutrients come from the foods we consume, and are mainly absorbed in the [small intestine](#).

Using [laxatives and purging](#) (as is sometimes seen in cases of bulimia

nervosa) can lead to poor quality nutrient intake. One study even found that the use of laxatives led to [12% less absorption](#) of essential nutrients.

Gastrointestinal issues

Laxative use affects the [gastrointestinal system](#). If you use them for a long period of time, it can cause [diarrhea](#).

The reason this [causes diarrhea](#) is because laxatives work to move waste quickly through the intestine and secrete water into the bowel. This can also, in turn, lead to an imbalance in mineral and salt levels in your body.

Health considerations

Although use of laxatives and stool softeners could temporarily lead to weight loss, this is only due to a loss of water weight, the detrimental effects of laxative misuse far outweigh any temporary weight loss you may achieve. [Misuse of laxatives](#) could also increase risk of eating disorders, such as bulimia nervosa.

Anyone who wants to lose weight should try to follow a structured [weight loss](#) program that includes a healthy, [balanced diet](#) paired with exercise. Laxatives should only be used to treat constipation if other methods haven't worked and after speaking with your GP.

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<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-03-ozempic-ways-dangerous-tiktok-weight.html>

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