

Ozempic, Wegovy have health benefits beyond weight loss, studies find

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New trials are showing how the blockbuster diabetes and weight-loss meds Ozempic and Wegovy can boost health in even more ways.

These two injected drugs are versions of [semaglutide](#). In multiple new data analyses, the drugs appeared to cut people's odds for heart failure and its complications, reduce deaths from COVID-19 and lower deaths from any cause.

Semaglutide is a member of family of drugs called GLP-1 agonists, which work by mimicking the effect of a natural hormone that helps reduce appetite, hunger and food intake.

The latest findings were presented Thursday in London at the [annual meeting](#) of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) and published simultaneously in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology (JACC)*.

The data show that "these groundbreaking medications are poised to revolutionize cardiovascular care and could dramatically enhance cardiovascular health," said Dr. Harlan Krumholz, *JACC* Editor-in-Chief and a professor of medicine at Yale University.

Some of the findings derive from sub-analyses of data from a major trial called [SELECT](#), which included more than 17,000 people who were overweight or obese and had been diagnosed with heart disease, but not diabetes.

The trial was funded by semaglutide's maker, Novo Nordisk, and in findings published in November it found that the 2.4 milligram (mg) dose of the drug cut the odds of heart-related deaths, heart attacks and strokes.

In the two new subset analyses from SELECT, data showed that people taking semaglutide had a lower odds for death from all causes, compared to people who got a weekly placebo injection.

Another SELECT analysis looked at differences in outcomes based on patients' gender. It found that women appeared to gain more of a heart-health benefit from the drug compared to men, but that both sexes did see reductions in terms of heart-related events.

Semaglutide also appeared to help shield users from the worst effects of COVID-19.

In a SELECT study data analysis, obese or overweight people who were taking the drug were infected with COVID at rates similar to those who were on placebo.

However, if they did get COVID, they were less likely to die from the disease if they had been taking semaglutide, the research showed.

Another study presented at the ESC meeting and published in the *JACC* focused on a major killer, heart failure.

This time, researchers looked at data from the FLOW trial, [published](#) in May and also funded by Novo Nordisk. That trial involved more than 3,500 people with type 2 diabetes and [chronic kidney disease](#) who got semaglutide or a placebo and were followed for an average of nearly 3.5 years. It found lower rates of kidney-related death in semaglutide users.

However, having both type 2 diabetes and kidney disease can raise a person's odds for heart failure, a condition where the heart loses its ability to efficiently pump blood.

The new subset analysis found that people in the FLOW trial who got semaglutide at the 1 mg dose had lower odds for new-onset heart failure or hospitalization for heart failure, compared to those getting the placebo injection.

In addition, three sub-studies of what's known as the [STEP-HFpEF program](#) looked at the effect of semaglutide (2.4 mgs) among obese people with heart failure.

According to a *JACC* news release, "semaglutide improved heart failure-related symptoms, [physical limitations](#) and exercise function and reduced body weight" in all patients.

The drug also reduced levels of inflammation based on measurements of a common blood marker called C-reactive protein (CRP), and these reductions occurred regardless of weight loss, the study found.

[Heart failure](#) is often accompanied by the [irregular heartbeat](#) known as atrial fibrillation (A-Fib). The study also found "even greater improvements in heart failure-related symptoms and physical limitations in those with vs. without A-Fib, though improvements were seen in both groups," according to the news release.

Finally, the [heart failure](#) study showed signs that use of semaglutide effected positive, healthy changes in the heart's structure and function, based on echocardiogram results.

Overall, "this portfolio of publications, derived from three major trials, significantly advances our understanding of the wide-ranging benefits of GLP-1 agonists," Krumholz said.

More information: There's more on how semaglutide and other GLP-1 meds work at the [Cleveland Clinic](#).

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