

Taking Wegovy, Zepbound? One expert has dietary advice

September 3 2024, by Dennis Thompson



Folks taking weight-loss drugs like [Wegovy](#) or [Zepbound](#) might think they've found a shortcut to better health.

But they still need to eat a high-quality diet if they want to maintain their well-being while they shed pounds, says a doctor with the University of Texas Southwestern.

"One common misconception about these medications is that they're a magic bullet for better health, and it doesn't necessarily matter what you eat when you're taking them. Nothing could be further from the truth," said Dr. Jaime Almondoz, director of UT Southwestern's Weight Wellness Center.

The typical American diet contains loads of ultra-processed, calorie-dense foods, but is often deficient in fruits, vegetables, fiber and essential nutrients, Almondoz said.

People on weight-loss drugs could suffer loss of muscle mass, fatigue, malnutrition and other [health consequences](#) if they don't eat healthy, Almondoz said.

Folks preparing for [bariatric surgery](#) are required to have multiple visits with a registered dietitian to create a healthy eating plan for them going forward.

"No such guidelines exist yet for anti-obesity medications, though patients now lose similar amounts of weight with these medications as they do with bariatric surgery," Almondoz said in a UT Southwestern news release.

A few basic steps can reduce the risk of GI side effects while taking weight-loss drugs, Almondoz said. These include:

- Avoiding fried and high-fat foods
- Limiting intake of carbonated drinks, alcohol and spicy foods
- Eating smaller meals

- Maintaining awareness of fullness cues
- Knowing the risk factors for malnutrition

Beyond that, a person prescribed weight-loss drugs should ask their doctor about a referral to a registered dietitian, to make sure they eat what their body needs, Almondoz said.

Patients need to build a [healthy diet](#) based on the six nutritional building blocks for healthy eating—protein, carbohydrates, fats, fiber, calories and water, Almondoz said.

"Dietary coaching on what foods to try and how to eat while taking these medications can help patients reduce the risk of [medication](#)-related gastrointestinal side effects, such as bloating, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and constipation," Almondoz said.

"For example, if we know up front that a patient doesn't eat enough [dietary fiber](#), we may recommend a fiber supplement and extra hydration to help keep their digestive tract moving," he added.

Overall, patients should remember that even during weight loss their body requires nourishment, he said.

"It is very important for patients who take anti-obesity medications to understand how to create a balanced diet that leads to both [weight loss](#) and better health," Almondoz said. "Simply eating less and skipping meals when taking anti-obesity medications can sometimes do more harm than good."

More information: The Mayo Clinic has more on concerns about [weight-loss medications](#).

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