



T: 0300 244 4000
E: medicines.policy@gov.scot

Sent by email to:
Medical Directors
Directors of Pharmacy
National Healthy Weight Leads Network
For cascade to:
GPs, community pharmacists, dietetic service
managers, prescribing nurses

6 May 2025

Dear healthcare professional,

REPORTING KNOWN OR SUSPECTED ILLICIT SUPPLY OF OBESITY MEDICINES SEMAGLUTIDE (WEGOVY®) AND TIRZEPATIDE (MOUNJARO®)

I am writing to you in light of the significant public interest in glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1 RA) and GLP-1/glucose-dependent insulintropic polypeptide receptor agonists (GIP RAs) medicines for weight loss and increased use outside of the NHS. Health Board feedback has indicated that a number of attendees at NHS weight management programmes disclose the use of weight loss medicines privately, with many reporting they use locally, privately sourced supplies without a prescription.

Illicit supply of medicines is an emerging concern for Police Scotland and they rely on intelligence to investigate such incidents further. Police Scotland is encouraging healthcare professionals to report any concerns on the illicit supply of weight loss medicines which can be done anonymously via their [online portal](#).

Background

GLP-1/GIP RAs are prescription-only medicines to be used under medical supervision and should only be prescribed by a registered healthcare professional. Providing GLP-1/GIP RA medicines without a prescription is illegal.

People buying prescription-only medicines without a prescription from a suitable healthcare professional risk being supplied with medicines that are not safe or suitable to take and significantly increase the risk of using substandard or fake medicines.

GLP-1/ GIP RAs are effective and acceptably safe treatments when used within their licensed indications. They are a class of medicines that are used to treat type 2 diabetes and obesity. Notably, some of the GLP-1RA medicines have more than one brand name and more than one indication. Liraglutide (Saxenda®), semaglutide (Wegovy®) and tirzepatide (Mounjaro®) are the only GLP-1/GIP RA products licensed for use in weight management. These medicines have been approved for use in the NHS in Scotland for the treatment of obesity in eligible people to be used alongside a reduced calorie diet and increased physical activity.



In September 2024, the Scottish Government and the NHS in Scotland published a [Consensus statement](#) on the national criteria for the prioritisation of GLP-1/GIP RAs for the treatment of obesity in Scotland. Work is currently underway to progress a phased approach to the availability of these medicines in each Health Board, embedded within an appropriate care pathway, to ensure sustainable access.

Engagement

I continue to engage with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), as the UK-wide regulator that has overarching responsibility for the safety of medicines, Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS), Police Scotland, the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), to discuss GLP-1/GIP RAs, including illegal advertising and counterfeit medicines.

The MHRA issued a [Drug Safety Update](#) on weight loss medicines in October 2024 and on 30 December 2024, published [communications](#) regarding purchasing these medicines without a prescription. This continues to be a high priority area for the MHRA and I would encourage healthcare professionals to sign up to their mailing list.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) made an [announcement](#) in December 2024 on the actions they are taking. I met with the ASA in March 2025 and they are working with the MHRA and GPhC to develop an enforcement notice specifically on named prescription only medicines.

The GPhC published updated [guidance](#) on 4 February 2025 regarding buying medicines safely online, and HIS are considering how to improve the general awareness of these medicines, as well as establishing clear expectations for their safe and appropriate use within the independent healthcare sector.

We are working collaboratively to produce public facing 'Once for Scotland' guidance on the use of GLP-1/GIP RAs, which will be available on NHS Inform by Summer 2025. I will circulate a link to the page when it has been published.

Thank you for the work that you do to ensure people are accessing safe and appropriate medicines within the NHS in Scotland.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Alison Strath FRPharmS
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer