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Tirzepatide "Mounjaro & Zepbound"

Tirzepatide ("Mounjaro") has been available in Canada since 2023-Nov. Tirzepatide, branded as "Zepbound" and indicated for obesity, was brought to market 2025-July. BC Pharmacare approval is awaited for both. Tirzepatide is covered by 80+% of third party insurers, a notable exception in British Columbia being Pacific Blue Cross. If you are paying out of pocket for tirzepatide, online discounts of 30-40% are available: those with diabetes should visit mymounjaro.ca, those with obesity only should visit myzepbound.ca. Without registering a single pen of Mounjaro or Zepbound will cost in excess of \$800. All prices listed below assume the maximum discount available through mymounjaro.ca or myzepbound.ca.

Tirzepatide is a "dual receptor agonist" - it stimulates both the GLP-1 receptor (like semaglutide "Ozempic") and unlike Ozempic it stimulates the GIP receptor as well. Tirzepatide powerfully reduces sugar and weight by suppressing appetite, by delaying stomach emptying (so people feel full longer) & by increasing the release of insulin from the body (the "incretin" effect). As such tirzepatide has a major role in the treatment of overweight & obese individuals with Type 2 diabetes as well as obese non-diabetic individuals.

Tirzepatide is widely used "off-label" in long-standing Type 1 diabetes for both weight loss and reduction in insulin requirement (reductions of 50% are often observed). Tirzepatide has been used experimentally in newly diagnosed Type 1 diabetes where it appears to have a role in preserving and increasing proliferation of beta cells, the cells that produce insulin. [Click here](#) for more on GLP-1s in T1D.

For tips on food choices for best results and to minimize side-effects, [click here](#).

The only common side-effect of tirzepatide is nausea & vomiting. Approximately 5% of individuals cannot take tirzepatide because of these side-effects. Many individuals have mild initial side-effects which settle with time. Tirzepatide does not increase the risk of cancer. It may slightly increase the incidence of pancreatitis & gallstones. Tirzepatide may slightly increase the risk of a [very rare eye condition known as NAION](#).

Tirzepatide is given by subcutaneous injection once weekly. The starting dose is 2.5 mg weekly. The dose may be increased every 4 weeks by 2.5 mg at a time. The highest approved dose is 15 mg weekly (though 30 mg weekly has been used experimentally). To get to the sugar and/or weight loss target the dose may be increased monthly from 2.5 weekly to 5.0, 7.5, 10.0, 12.5 and finally to 15.0 mg weekly as necessary. In terms of weight loss, most individuals have reached a plateau (maximal weight loss) after 28 weeks of treatment, assuming dose increases monthly.

In approved dosing, Mounjaro is more potent than Ozempic for both the lowering of weight and sugar. In the United States, Mounjaro (=Zepbound) is also approved for the treatment of sleep apnea. By extrapolation Mounjaro 2.5 mg weekly is roughly equivalent to Ozempic 1 mg weekly.

For a head-to-head comparison see [Frias et al 2021 NEJM](#): Figures 1 & 2 from the Frias paper for sugar/glycemia & weight loss respectively are shown as screenshots at the end of this article.

Mounjaro & Zepbound are available in pens with 2.5, 5.0, 7.5, 10.0, 12.5 and 15.0 mg formulations: each pen contains 4 shots of that strength i.e. sufficient for 4 weeks. All pen formulations, 2.5, 5.0, 7.5, 10.0, 12.5 and 15.0 mg contain the same volume = 0.6 ml. A full discharge of each pen equals 60 “clicks” and delivers $\frac{1}{4}$ of this volume. Thus a full discharge of 60 clicks delivers the intended dose for each pen. Each pen holds 240 clicks.

Below are DIN & UPC numbers for Mounjaro required for completion of insurance forms.

	2.5 mg/0.6 mL per week	5 mg/0.6 mL per week	7.5 mg/0.6 mL per week	10 mg/0.6 mL per week	12.5 mg/0.6 mL per week	15 mg/0.6 mL per week
DIN:	02551950	02551969	02551977	02551985	02551993	02552000
UPC:	773007001911	773007001935	773007001942	773007001959	773007001966	773007001973

All prices below are based on wholesale prices (retail prices may vary by pharmacy) and dispensing fee

- 2.5 and 5 mg pen: \$300 for 4 weeks (\$10.71/day when used according to label)
- 7.5 and 10 mg pens: \$375 for 4 weeks (\$13.39/day when used according to label)
- 12.5 and 15 mg pens: \$450 for 4 weeks (\$16.07/day when used according to label)

Cost-conscious clients who wish to take advantage of off-label, non-Health Canada use of the 15 mg pen, may ask their physician to prescribe the 15 mg pen “as directed” and then “count the clicks” to get the desired dose.

Using a 15 mg pen, by “counting the clicks” the following doses pertain:

- 2.5 mg = 10 clicks (\$2.68/day..) each pen will last 24 weeks
- 5.0 mg = 20 clicks (\$5.36/day..) each pen will last 12 weeks
- 7.5 mg = 30 clicks (\$8.04/day..) each pen will last 8 weeks
- 10 mg = 40 clicks (\$10.70/day..) each pen will last 6 weeks
- 12.5 mg = 50 clicks (\$13.39/day..) each pen will last almost 5 weeks
- 15 mg = 60 clicks (\$16.07/day..) each pen will last 4 weeks

If using a 12.5 mg pen the number of clicks for each dose shown immediately above should be multiplied by 1.2 (2.5 mg = $10 \times 1.2 = 12$ clicks etc). If using a 10 mg pen the number of clicks should be multiplied by 1.5 (2.5 mg = $10 \times 1.5 = 15$ clicks etc).

After the intended 240 clicks (4 full doses of 60 clicks) have been given there still remains significant medication visible in the pen, yet it can't be given because the pen plunger can be wound no further. In fact there are another 60 clicks equal to one more full dose. Those extra 60 clicks can be extracted using an insulin syringe. For a demo see this [youtube short](#). Using this technique the cost per day described in the paragraph above is reduced by a further 20%.

Note, Mounjaro pens were only intended to last 3 weeks after the first dose. By using the “counting the clicks” method above, the pen will be required to last longer than approved by Health Canada. Two paragraphs above is listed how long the pen will last. The manufacturer lists the shelf-life of 24 months of Mounjaro stored unopened at 4 degrees. By inference, if the product is returned to a well-functioning fridge immediately after use, a no-touch technique is used with a new pen tip each time, pens can be assumed to be safe and effective for many months.

In the United States Mounjaro is also provided in single-dose vials in strengths of 2.5, 5.0, 7.5, 10.0, 12.5 and 15.0 mg (these were available in Canada briefly prior to the pen system being released). Cost-conscious consumers are directed to this [2 minute video](#) or [50 second short](#) & this [one-pager](#) whereby those on doses <15 mg per week can enjoy considerable savings.

Does tirzepatide reduce dementia? This is a question that many researchers are asking. Pre-clinical evidence suggests that drugs in the GLP-1 class, including tirzepatide, may do so - for a review article on this subject [click here](#). BCDiabetes is working on a collaboration with the author Simon Cork in the UK.

short URL for this document = <https://bit.ly/BCDtirzepatide>

Below are shown figures from [Frias et al 2021 NEJM](#): Figure 1 (sugar/glycemia) & Figure 2 weight loss, are shown below. Tirzepatide at 5 mg weekly results in greater sugar & weight reduction than semaglutide 1 mg weekly

Figure 1 (sugar control)

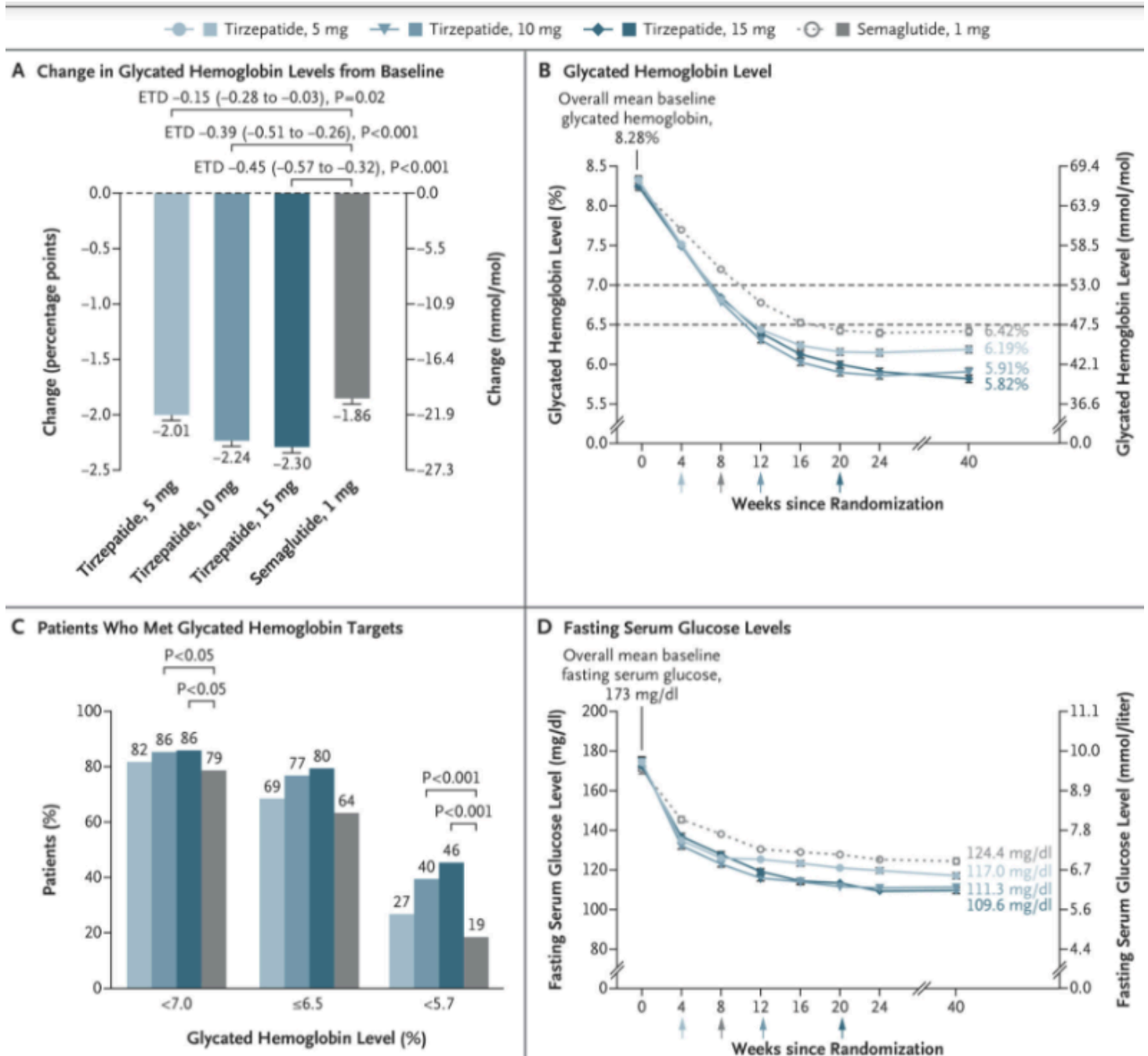


Figure 2 (weight loss and lipids)

