



Benefits of Weight-Loss Drugs for People With HIV

New research continues to show unexpected benefits from GLP-1 receptor agonists, including for people living with HIV.

May 12, 2025 By [Liz Highleyman](#)

GLP-1 receptor agonists, such as semaglutide (Ozempic or Wegovy), were originally developed to treat type 2 diabetes and are now widely used to manage obesity. These drugs reduce the risk for cardiovascular and kidney disease and are being studied for fatty liver disease. But new research continues to show unexpected benefits, including for people living with HIV.

One study presented at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections looked at outcomes among HIV-positive people with metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease in the SLIM LIVER study. People who saw a reduction in liver triglyceride levels also showed improvement in grip strength, an indicator of biological aging and frailty. Another analysis from the study suggested that semaglutide led to beneficial changes in the gut microbiome.

Two years ago, researchers reported that semaglutide reduced total and visceral fat in HIV-positive people with lipohypertrophy, or abdominal fat accumulation. Now, a new analysis from the same study has shown that people who received semaglutide had a slower rate of biological aging according to various epigenetic clocks, which use biomarkers such as DNA methylation. What's more, another analysis found that semaglutide may have beneficial effects on cognitive function, especially visual-spatial ability, which the researchers suggested may be due to reduced inflammation.

Finally, an analysis of HIV-positive people in routine clinical care who were receiving semaglutide for diabetes or weight management found that they had lower levels of alcohol use than those not taking the drug. "Additional evaluation of the role of GLP-1 receptor agonists as medications for alcohol use and other substance use disorders is needed," the researchers concluded.