

## Could You Be Allergic to Your GLP-1?



What Docs Want You to Know About 'GLP-1 Skin Itch'Getty Images

*"Hearst Magazines and Yahoo may earn commission or revenue on some items through these links."*

There's been chatter on social media for years about potential side effects you can experience from taking GLP-1 medications, whether it's "[Ozempic face](#)" or "[Ozempic butt](#)". But the latest side effect is one we didn't see coming.

Some people taking GLP-1 medications (such as semaglutide, sold under the brand names Ozempic or Wegovy) have reported itchy skin after starting the new meds, writing about their experiences on [message boards](#) and [social networks](#). "I'm on my highest dose of the Ozempic, and suddenly yesterday I have hundreds of raised round itchy bumps. All over my body," wrote one person on Reddit. "I took my second dose...and a couple hours later felt like I had been attacked by mosquitoes," another

said. And while some of the threads date back as far as three years, both [Vogue](#) and [The Daily Beast](#) have reported on the GLP-1-associated itchiness with renewed attention just in the past month.

Doctors say a few factors could be behind GLP-1-associated skin itch. Here's what you should keep in mind.

**Meet the experts:** [Gary Goldenberg](#), MD, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital; [Ife J. Rodney](#), MD, founding director of Eternal Dermatology + Aesthetics; [Mir Ali](#), MD, medical director of MemorialCare Surgical Weight Loss Center at Orange Coast Medical Center in Fountain Valley, California.

## **How common is itchy skin as a side effect of GLP-1 medications?**

Our experts noted that itchy skin wasn't unheard of, but it certainly wasn't common. "In my practice, only a few patients have reported itchy skin while on GLP-1 medications," says [Mir Ali](#), MD, medical director of MemorialCare Surgical Weight Loss Center at Orange Coast Medical Center in Fountain Valley, CA. "I have actually observed this complaint more frequently among surgical weight loss patients," Ali notes.

[Ife J. Rodney](#), MD, the founding director of Eternal Dermatology + Aesthetics, also adds that she hasn't seen many cases of itchy skin among her patients on GLP-1 medications like Ozempic.

## **What causes GLP-1 skin itch?**

There are a few potential things going on here. An important one to keep in mind is that this could be a sign of an allergic reaction. "Patients may develop a hypersensitivity—an allergy—to the medication, which can manifest as hives or itching skin," says [Gary Goldenberg](#), MD, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital. The [American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology](#) (AAAAI) notes that this can happen because your body recognizes the

medication as a foreign substance and mounts an immune response against it.

But other factors can explain the itch, too. “Weight loss itself, especially if rapid, can cause itching,” Goldenberg says.

Ali agrees, adding that “significant weight loss in general can lead to itchy skin due to nutritional and hormonal changes.” Nutrition can also play a role here, Rodney says. “Shifts in your diet, including fewer fatty acids and less water, can contribute to dryness of your skin,” she explains.

Some patients report localized itch at the injection site, especially in cases where people injected the same area repeatedly, Rodney points out.

## **How to lower the risk of GLP-1 skin itch**

It can be tough to avoid GLP-1-associated skin itch entirely, especially since doctors don't know who will experience this. Ultimately, the best way to avoid the itchy side effect depends on what's behind it. If you suspect you're experiencing an allergic reaction, contact your doctor immediately to discuss next steps. “If the itchiness is due to a mild allergy, an antihistamine may provide relief,” Ali says. “However, if symptoms persist or worsen, it may be necessary to discontinue the medication.”

But if this is more about skin changes, Goldenberg says it's crucial to focus on internal and external hydration—meaning, drink plenty of water and grab an unscented moisturizer. “Using an appropriate skin cleanser and moisturizer is very important in general,” he says. “For those on GLP-1 medications, it may be even more important.”

## **Signs you're dealing with an allergic reaction**

While any itchiness is uncomfortable, it's especially concerning when it results from an allergic reaction. These are the biggest signs of a mild allergic reaction from a GLP-1, according to the AAAAI:

- Itchy skin, rash, or hives

- Swelling of the hands or feet

Keep in mind: more severe allergic reactions may cause swelling of the face or lips, trouble breathing, and dizziness or fainting, per the AAAAI. While severe allergic reactions can be immediate (appearing within two hours of taking the medication), in some cases, people may have a delayed reaction that takes a few days to a few months to appear.

Ultimately, if you're noticing skin itching that you think might be related to a GLP-1, it's a good idea to check in with your prescribing doctor. They can guide you on the next steps from there—and hopefully, recommend a treatment that brings you more relief and less itching.

---