

Weight Loss or Diabetic Drugs and Anaesthesia

Information for patients on GLP-1 RA drugs

This information leaflet is for patients who are on a Glucagon Like Peptide-1 Receptor Agonist (GLP1-RA) drug for either diabetes control or weight management and who are requiring surgery under anaesthesia.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

These drugs include:

- Semaglutide (*Ozempic, Wegovy, Rybelsus*)
- Tirzepatide (*Mounjaro, Zepbound*)
- Exenatide (*Bydureon*)
- Lixisenatide (*Lyxumia, Suliqua*)
- Liraglutide (*Victoza, Saxenda*)
- Dulaglutide (*Trulicity*)

What is the risk of anaesthesia and the GLP-1 RA drugs?

Normally, if you are to have an anaesthetic for surgery, you are instructed to fast from solid food for at least six hours prior.

This fasting advice is given for all types of anaesthesia including general anaesthesia, sedation and regional anaesthesia such as a spinal injection. This is of paramount safety due to the risk of stomach contents passing back into the foodpipe (regurgitation) and entering the airways or lungs (aspiration) under anaesthesia.

Although this is rare, it can cause serious complications such as pneumonia, requiring ventilator support or even death, if severe.

Therefore, by following fasting advice, it aims to ensure the stomach is empty of food content to minimise this risk.

The GLP-1 RA drugs are increasing in use and one of the ways they work is by slowing down the rate of digestion and stomach emptying. This is why some patients may feel fullness ('satiety') quicker after eating and may also experience the gastro-intestinal side effects such as nausea and bloating.

There have been recent reports of delayed stomach emptying and episodes of regurgitation and aspiration under anaesthesia due to the effects of the GLP-1 RA drugs. This is despite following the normal fasting instructions. While more research is being undertaken worldwide to learn more about the effects of these drugs and anaesthesia it has been recommended that we take suitable precautions regarding these drugs and anaesthesia.

As a patient, it is important that you are aware of these risks and have a discussion with your anaesthetist about this.

What do I need to do pre-operatively?

Please inform the pre-operative assessment team if you are on these drugs. It is important the pre-operative nurse and anaesthetist know the following:

- Why you are on the medication
- How long you have been on the medication
- What is your current dose
- If you are on an increasing dose and when it was last increased
- Any side effects of the medication.

Please let your pre-operative assessment nurse and anaesthetist know if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal bloating
- Constipation
- Diarrhoea.

What can be done to reduce the risk of aspiration?

Your case will be individually reviewed by the pre-operative / anaesthetic team and the advice may vary depending if you are on the medication for diabetic control or weight management. There are several different strategies that can be used to safely reduce the risk of regurgitation or aspiration and this will be discussed with you by your anaesthetist.

Do not stop taking your prescribed medicine(s) without first discussing this with your doctor.

Contact us

If you have any questions, please ask our pre-operative care team on **020 8266 6909** (Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm)

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Was this information helpful? Yes / No

Please let us know, contact

patient.information@stgeorges.nhs.uk and include the leaflet title.

Thank you.

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

The NHS provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. **Tel:** 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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