
GLP-1 Medications & Surgery

A short, focused guide for patients taking Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro, Zepbound, Trulicity, Saxenda, or similar medications.

GLP-1 receptor agonist medications slow stomach emptying. On the day of surgery, that matters: if food or liquid remains in the stomach when you are put under anesthesia, it can be inhaled into the lungs. Because of this, anesthesia societies have issued specific guidance on holding GLP-1 medications before surgery. This document summarizes what that means for you.

If you are on one of these medications

Semaglutide (Ozempic, Wegovy, Rybelsus), Tirzepatide (Mounjaro, Zepbound), Liraglutide (Saxenda, Victoza), Dulaglutide (Trulicity), Exenatide (Byetta, Bydureon), or any other GLP-1 / GIP receptor agonist — the protocol below applies.

Hold timing

Weekly formulations (Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro, Zepbound, Trulicity, Bydureon)

- Hold one full week before surgery.
- Your last dose should be given approximately 7 days before your scheduled surgery date — NOT closer.

Daily formulations (Saxenda, Victoza, Byetta, Rybelsus)

- Hold the day of surgery. Some anesthesia teams will ask you to hold the day before as well. Follow the hospital's pre-op guidance for the exact timing.

Clear-liquid diet — 24 hours before surgery

For any patient taking a GLP-1, the recommendation is a clear-liquid diet for the 24 hours leading up to surgery. This reduces the chance of retained stomach contents even if the hold has been observed.

- Allowed: water, apple juice without pulp, white grape juice, black coffee, black tea, sports drinks, plain gelatin, popsicles without fruit or dairy.
- Not allowed in the 24 hours before surgery: any solid food, milk or cream, smoothies, protein shakes, broth with solids, yogurt, applesauce, pudding.
- Stop clear liquids 2 hours before surgery (unless the hospital instructs otherwise).

What if I took my dose too close to surgery?

Call the office as soon as you realize. Depending on timing and the hospital's anesthesia assessment, surgery may be safe as scheduled, may benefit from additional fasting, or may need to be rescheduled. The decision is made case by case — do not skip this call.

Coordinate with the prescribing physician

Important

GLP-1 medications are frequently prescribed for diabetes. Holding the medication around surgery can affect blood-sugar control. If you take a GLP-1 for diabetes (not weight), coordinate the hold timing and alternate glycemic management with your prescribing physician (primary care or endocrinology) ahead of the surgery date. Do not simply stop without a back-up plan for blood sugar.

If you need help — call us

North County Neurosurgery: (442) 273-5056 — Monday–Friday, 8 am – 5 pm.

For questions about your specific medication, dose, or timing relative to surgery, the hospital's pre-operative education / anesthesia phone call or visit is the right place to get case-specific guidance. If you have not yet been contacted, let our office know and we will make sure that happens.



— Evan Winograd, MD

Board-Certified Neurosurgeon · North County Neurosurgery

(442) 273-5056 · northcountyneuro.com