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Clinical Guideline

Oscar Clinical Guideline: Antidiabetic Agents - Glucagon-like Peptide-1 (GLP-1) Receptor Agonists (PG152, Ver. 7)

Antidiabetic Agents - Glucagon-like Peptide-1 (GLP-1) Receptor Agonists

- Dual Glucose-dependent Insulinotropic Polypeptide (GIP) and GLP-1 Receptor Agonists
  - Mounjaro (Tirzepatide)
- Glucagon-like Peptide-1 (GLP-1) Receptor Agonists
  - Bydureon BCise (Exenatide)
  - Byetta (Exenatide)
  - Liraglutide (Victoza)
  - Ozempic (Semaglutide)
  - Rybelsus (Semaglutide)
  - Trulicity (Dulaglutide)

Disclaimer

Clinical guidelines are developed and adopted to establish evidence-based clinical criteria for utilization management decisions. Clinical guidelines are applicable according to policy and plan type. The Plan may delegate utilization management decisions of certain services to third parties who may develop and adopt their own clinical criteria.

Coverage of services is subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of a member's policy, as well as applicable state and federal law. Clinical guidelines are also subject to in-force criteria such as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) national coverage determination (NCD) or local coverage determination (LCD) for Medicare Advantage plans. Please refer to the member's policy documents (e.g., Certificate/Evidence of Coverage, Schedule of Benefits, Plan Formulary) or contact the Plan to confirm coverage.

Summary

Incretin mimetics, also known as glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists and dual glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP) and GLP-1 receptor agonists, are an important class of antidiabetic agents that potentiate glucose-dependent insulin secretion, suppress glucagon secretion, slow gastric emptying, and promote satiety. They are used to manage type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), a long-term medical condition characterized by high blood sugar levels due to the pancreas not producing enough insulin and/or the body not responding effectively to insulin (insulin resistance).

- Mounjaro (tirzepatide) is a unique dual glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP) and GLP-1 receptor agonist. Clinical trials, including the SURPASS series, have demonstrated that Mounjaro (tirzepatide) significantly reduces hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) levels (up to 2.8%) and body weight (up to 14.8 kg or about 32.5 lb) compared to placebo, semaglutide, insulin degludec, and insulin glargine. Cardiovascular outcome studies are ongoing to assess its impact on major adverse cardiovascular events (MACE). A new single-dose vial formulation of Mounjaro (tirzepatide) is now available, offering additional administration options.
- Other notable GLP-1 receptor agonists include:
    - Exenatide extended-release (Bydureon BCise)
    - Exenatide immediate-release (Byetta)
    - Semaglutide injection (Ozempic)
    - Semaglutide oral (Rybelsus)
    - Dulaglutide (Trulicity)
    - Liraglutide (Victoza)

Several of these medications, particularly dulaglutide (Trulicity), liraglutide (Victoza), and both injectable and oral semaglutide (Ozempic, Rybelsus), have demonstrated cardiovascular benefits. They have been shown to reduce the risk of MACE in adults with T2DM and established cardiovascular disease or multiple cardiovascular risk factors. These therapies are approved and recommended for this indication, aligning with the 2025 American Diabetes Association (ADA) Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes and the 2022 American Association of Clinical Endocrinology (AACE) guidelines.

Ozempic (semaglutide) demonstrated renal-protective effects in adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus and chronic kidney disease. Ozempic (semaglutide) is approved and recommended for this indication, aligning with the 2025 American Diabetes Association (ADA) Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes.

Noteworthy updates include a safety warning for Ozempic (semaglutide) regarding increased reports of ileus, a potentially life-threatening intestinal blockage. Clinicians should monitor individuals for signs of

gastrointestinal obstruction and manage accordingly. Additionally, the 2025 ADA Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes note concurrent use of dipeptidyl peptidase-4 (DPP-4) inhibitors with a GLP-1 RA or a dual GIP and GLP-1 RA is not recommended due to lack of additional glucose lowering beyond that of a GLP-1 RA alone.

Management of T2DM typically involves lifestyle modifications such as diet, exercise, and weight loss. Pharmacologic therapy is often necessary to achieve glycemic control. Metformin is generally preferred for initial treatment; however, GLP-1 receptor agonists with proven cardiovascular benefits are recommended for patients with T2DM and established atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD) or high cardiovascular risk.

NOTE:

1. The Plan requires that members either be unable to use, or have tried and failed preferred medication(s) first. Requests for non-formulary medications are subject to Non-Formulary Products Criteria (PG069).
2. Coverage for prescription medications intended for obesity treatment, weight loss, weight reduction, or dietary control varies depending on a member's specific benefit policy. Please refer to the member's benefit plan document for information on benefit eligibility and terms of coverage. This clinical guideline specifically addresses the use of GLP-1 receptor agonists for type 2 diabetes mellitus. Other indications are managed under separate guidelines.
    a. For coverage criteria related to the use of GLP-1 receptor agonists for weight management, please refer to the Oscar Clinical Guideline: Weight Loss Agents (PG070).
    b. For coverage criteria related to Wegovy (semaglutide) for cardiovascular risk reduction in adults with established cardiovascular disease and obesity or overweight, please refer to the Oscar Clinical Guideline: Wegovy for Cardiovascular Risk Reduction or Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Steatohepatitis (MASH) (PG194).
    c. For coverage criteria related to Zepbound (tirzepatide) for the treatment of moderate-to-severe obstructive sleep apnea in adults with obesity, please refer to the Oscar Clinical Guideline: Zepbound (tirzepatide) for the Treatment of Obstructive Sleep Apnea (PG255).

Table 1: Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists (i.e., incretin mimetics)

Classification	Drug[#]	FDA-Approved Indications
Dual Glucose-dependent Insulinotropic Polypeptide (GIP) and GLP-1 Receptor Agonists	Mounjaro (tirzepatide)	Adjunct to diet and exercise to improve glycemic control in adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus.
Incretin mimetics Antidiabetics	Bydureon BCise (exenatide)	Adjunct to diet and exercise to improve glycemic control in adults and pediatrics aged 10 years and older with type 2 diabetes mellitus [1]
	Byetta (exenatide)	Adjunct to diet and exercise to improve glycemic control in adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus. [1]
	Ozempic (semaglutide)	Diabetes mellitus, type 2, treatment: ● As an adjunct to diet and exercise to improve glycemic control in adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus. ● To reduce the risk of major adverse cardiovascular events (cardiovascular death, non-fatal myocardial infarction or non-fatal stroke) in adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus and established cardiovascular disease. ● To reduce the risk of sustained eGFR decline, end-stage kidney disease and cardiovascular death in adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus and chronic kidney disease.
	Rybelsus (semaglutide)	Diabetes mellitus, type 2, treatment: ● As an adjunct to diet and exercise to improve glycemic control in adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus. ● To reduce the risk of major adverse cardiovascular events (cardiovascular death, non-fatal myocardial infarction, or non-fatal stroke) in adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus who are at high risk for these events.
	Trulicity (dulaglutide)	Diabetes mellitus, type 2, treatment: ● As an adjunct to diet and exercise to improve glycemic control in adults and pediatrics10 years of age and older with type 2 diabetes mellitus. ● To reduce the risk of major cardiovascular events (cardiovascular death, nonfatal myocardial infarction, nonfatal stroke) in adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus who have established cardiovascular disease or multiple cardiovascular risk factors.
	Victoza	Diabetes mellitus, type 2, treatment: [1 6]

Classification	Drug[#]	FDA-Approved Indications
	(liraglutide)	• As an adjunct to diet and exercise to improve glycemic control in adults and pediatrics 10 years of age and older with type 2 diabetes mellitus. • To reduce the risk of major cardiovascular events (cardiovascular death, nonfatal myocardial infarction, nonfatal stroke) in adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus and established cardiovascular disease.

[#] *include both brand and generic and all dosage forms and strengths unless otherwise stated*

Limitations of Use:

[1] *Coadministration with other exenatide-containing products is not recommended.*

[2] *Not for treatment of type 1 diabetes mellitus.*

Definitions

"Dipeptidyl Peptidase-4 (DPP-4) Inhibitors" are a class of oral antidiabetic drugs used primarily in the management of type 2 diabetes mellitus. DPP-4 inhibitors work by blocking the action of the DPP-4 enzyme, which is responsible for the degradation of incretin hormones, namely glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) and glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP). Examples include alogliptin (Nesina), saxagliptin (Onglyza), sitagliptin (Januvia), Tradjenta (linagliptin), and Zituvio (sitagliptin). Examples of DDP-4 combinations include Jentadueto (linagliptin/metformin), Jentadueto XR (linagliptin/metformin), alogliptin/metformin (Kazano), saxagliptin/metformin (Kombiglyze XR), sitagliptin/metformin (Janumet), sitagliptin/metformin (Janumet XR), Zituvimet (sitagliptin/metformin), Zituvimet XR (sitagliptin/metformin), alogliptin/pioglitazone (Oseni), Glyxambi (empagliflozin/linagliptin), Qtern (dapagliflozin/saxagliptin), and Steglujan (ertugliflozin/sitagliptin).

"Insulin" is a hormone produced by the beta cells in the pancreas. It facilitates the entry of glucose into cells for energy production. Insufficient insulin leads to a high blood glucose level, a condition known as diabetes. Oral and injectable medications can help increase insulin production, enhance the body's sensitivity to insulin, and decrease blood sugar levels.

"Incretin Mimetics" are a class of medications that imitate the function of incretins, natural hormones in the body that help lower post-meal blood sugar levels. These medications, also known as glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists, slow digestion, prevent the liver from making too much glucose, and help the pancreas produce more insulin when needed.

"Type 1 Diabetes" is an autoimmune condition where the pancreas's beta cells are unable to produce sufficient insulin, leading to elevated blood glucose levels. Patients with Type 1 diabetes often require daily insulin injections to regulate their blood glucose.

"Type 2 Diabetes" is a metabolic disorder characterized by insufficient insulin production or insulin resistance in the body cells. It is more common than Type 1 and often managed through lifestyle changes, non-insulin medications, and, if necessary, insulin injections.

"Blood Glucose" is the primary sugar found in the bloodstream, serving as the body's main energy source. Chronic high blood glucose levels can lead to complications from blood vessel damage.

"Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c)" is a blood test that measures average blood glucose levels over the past 2 to 3 months. It is also referred to as the A1C or glycosylated hemoglobin test. Various factors, such as age, ethnicity, certain conditions, and pregnancy, can affect A1C results.

"Hyperglycemia" is the medical term for high blood glucose. It can occur due to inadequate fasting (fasting hyperglycemia) or post-meal (postprandial hyperglycemia).

"Hypoglycemia" is a condition characterized by abnormally low blood glucose, typically less than 70 mg/dL. Symptoms include hunger, nervousness, dizziness, confusion, and in severe cases, unconsciousness. Immediate treatment involves consuming carbohydrate-rich foods or using injectable glucagon for severe cases.

"Cardiovascular Disease" refers to a class of diseases involving the heart and blood vessels. It is a common complication in individuals with long-term Type 2 diabetes and is often a key consideration when selecting an appropriate diabetes medication.

Clinical Indications

Medical Necessity Criteria for Initial Clinical Review

Initial Indication-Specific Criteria

Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus

The Plan considers glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists and dual glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP) and GLP-1 receptor agonists (i.e., incretin mimetics) medically necessary when ALL the following criteria are met:

1. The medication is age-appropriate for the member as per the FDA-approved indications*; AND*
    - ➢ *For Bydureon BCise (exenatide), Trulicity (dulaglutide), and Victoza (liraglutide), the member must be 10 years of age or older.*
    - ➢ *For other glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists and dual glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP) and GLP-1 receptor agonists, the member must be 18 years of age or older.*
2. The member has a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes mellitus based on at least ONE (1) of the following diagnostic criteria:
    a. A fasting glucose level of greater than 126 mg/dL (7.0 mmol/L)**; and/or*

b. A 2-hour glucose tolerance test result of greater than 200 mg/dL (11.1 mmol/L)*; *and/or*
c. A hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) level of 6.5% (48 mmol/mol) or higher*; *and/or*
d. Random plasma glucose ≥ 200 mg/dL (11.1 mmol/L) with classic symptoms of hyperglycemia (e.g., frequent urination, extreme thirst, and unexplained weight loss) or hyperglycemic crisis; *AND*

3. The member has ONE (1) of the following:
    a. Is unable to use, or has adequately tried and failed metformin at a minimum effective dose of 1500 mg daily for at least 90 days; *or*
    b. Requires combination therapy to achieve glycemic control AND has an HbA1c of 7.5 percent or greater; *or*
    c. Has established Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease (ASCVD) (e.g., coronary artery disease, cerebrovascular disease, peripheral arterial disease), AND the request is for ONE (1) of the following:
        i. Liraglutide (Victoza); *or*
        ii. Ozempic (semaglutide); *or*
        iii. Rybelsus (semaglutide); *or*
        iv. Trulicity (dulaglutide); *or*
    d. Has presence of multiple (2 or more) cardiovascular risk factors (e.g., hypertension, dyslipidemia, smoking, obesity, family history of premature ASCVD) AND the request is for Trulicity (dulaglutide) or Rybelsus (semaglutide); *or*
    e. Has CKD with an estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR) of 15 mL/min/1.73 m² or greater AND the request is for ONE (1) of the following:
        i. Liraglutide (Victoza); *or*
        ii. Ozempic (semaglutide); *or*
        iii. Trulicity (dulaglutide); *and*
4. The member is not receiving a GLP-1 receptor agonist or dual GIP and GLP-1 receptor agonist in combination with a DPP-4 inhibitor or DPP-4 antidiabetic combination; *AND*
5. The requested medication will not be used concomitantly with another GLP-1 receptor agonist or dual GIP and GLP-1 receptor agonist.

<u>If the above prior authorization criteria are met, the requested drug will be approved for up to 12-months.</u>

Continued Care

Medical Necessity Criteria for Subsequent Clinical Review

Subsequent Indication-Specific Criteria

Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus

The Plan considers glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists and dual glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP) and GLP-1 receptor agonists (i.e., incretin mimetics) medically necessary when ALL the following criteria are met:

1. The member meets ONE (1) of the following:
    a. A reduction in Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) since initiation of therapy, documented within the past 6 months*; or*
    b. Maintenance of target HbA1c levels (e.g., HbA1c less than 7% or as determined by the treating provider based on member-specific goals)*; or*
    c. Improvement in fasting plasma glucose levels since initiation of therapy*; or*
    d. Presence of established ASCVD, multiple cardiovascular risk factors, or chronic kidney disease (CKD) AND the requested GLP-1 receptor agonist is ONE (1) of the following agents with proven benefits in these conditions:
        i. Liraglutide (Victoza)*; or*
        ii. Ozempic (semaglutide)*; or*
        iii. Rybelsus (semaglutide); *or*
        iv. Trulicity (dulaglutide)*; and*
2. The member is not receiving a GLP-1 receptor agonist or dual GIP and GLP-1 receptor agonist in combination with a DPP-4 inhibitor or DPP-4 antidiabetic combination; *AND*
3. The requested medication will not be used concomitantly with another GLP-1 receptor agonist or dual GIP and GLP-1 receptor agonist.

If the above reauthorization criteria are met, the requested drug will be approved for up to 12-months.

Experimental or Investigational / Not Medically Necessary

Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists and dual glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP) and GLP-1 receptor agonists (i.e., incretin mimetics) for any other indication is considered not medically necessary by the Plan, as it is deemed to be experimental, investigational, or unproven.

NOTE - This clinical guideline specifically addresses the use of GLP-1 receptor agonists and dual glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP) and GLP-1 receptor agonists for type 2 diabetes mellitus. For other indications, such as weight management and cardiovascular risk reduction, please refer to the respective clinical guidelines:

- *Weight Loss Agents (PG070), for coverage criteria related to the use of GLP-1 receptor agonists or dual glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP) and GLP-1 receptor agonists for weight management.*
- *Wegovy for Cardiovascular Risk Reduction or Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Steatohepatitis (MASH) (PG194), for coverage criteria related to Wegovy (semaglutide) for cardiovascular risk reduction in adults with established cardiovascular disease and obesity or overweight or Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Steatohepatitis (MASH)*
- *Zepbound (tirzepatide) for the Treatment of Obstructive Sleep Apnea (PG255), for coverage criteria related to the use of the dual glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP) and GLP-1 receptor agonists Zepbound (tirzepatide) for the Treatment of Obstructive Sleep Apnea.*
- *"Type 1.5" Diabetes mellitus. Members may have features of both type 1 diabetes and type 2 diabetes; however, at this time the American Diabetes Association (ADA) "Standard of Care in Diabetes" does not yet recognize the designation of "type 1.5 diabetes." Please see American Diabetes Association (ADA) "Standard of Care in Diabetes" Chapter 2: Diagnosis and Classification of Diabetes: Standards of Care in Diabetes—2025 figure 2.1 for a reference in these cases. The prescriber will need to determine the primary diabetes diagnosis appropriate for the member.*

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Appendix A

Metformin in Type 2 Diabetes

*The recommendation for a minimum effective dose of 1500 milligrams daily of metformin is derived from clinical findings which show that this dosage effectively regulates both fasting blood glucose and glycosylated hemoglobin levels - crucial markers of long-term glucose control.

Metformin functions by decreasing glucose production in the liver and enhancing insulin sensitivity in both the liver and peripheral tissues. This enhancement in turn improves the uptake and usage of glucose. The efficacy of metformin is dose-dependent, with the most clinically meaningful responses usually not seen at doses below 1500 milligrams per day.

The strategy of starting metformin treatment at a lower dose and gradually stepping up the dose over time (typically over a period of weeks) is useful in reducing the occurrence and intensity of gastrointestinal (GI) side effects. These side effects are the most common adverse reactions linked with metformin therapy and can include symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramping, and bloating. Commencing therapy at a lower dose (for instance, 500 mg twice daily or 850 mg once daily) and progressively increasing the dosage over time allows individuals to better tolerate metformin. This results in improved medication adherence and ultimately, superior glycemic control.

- For those who need further glycemic control beyond what can be achieved with a total daily dose of 2000 mg, the dosage of metformin can be boosted up to a maximum of 2550 mg per day, given in divided doses. This upper limit is based on clinical trials that show doses above this level do not provide an additional glycemic control benefit but may increase the risk of adverse effects.
- For pediatrics, the same principle of beginning at a lower dose and incrementally increasing applies, with a maximum limit of 2000 mg per day given in divided doses.

Table 2: Metformin in Diabetes Treatment

Clinical Consideration	Recommendation
Understanding Metformin	Metformin is frequently used due to its efficacy, cost-effectiveness, and cardiovascular benefits. However, GI adverse effects are common and could limit its use.

Managing Patient Expectations	Inform individuals that side effects are often temporary and encourage patience during the dosage adjustment period.
Choosing Metformin Type	Extended-release (ER) versions are generally preferred due to fewer daily doses and reduced discontinuation rates. However, consider cost and coverage on the individual's plan.
Initiating Metformin	Start at a low dose (500 mg for ER/IR or 250 mg for those with GI intolerance history). Consider using liquid formulations or single-ingredient products for easier titration.
Dosage Increase	Gradually up titrate dosage every one to two weeks. Decrease back to the last tolerated dose if GI symptoms occur, and then try to increase more slowly.
Dosage Titration (Adults)	Dosage may be increased by 500 mg at weekly intervals until desired response or a maximum dosage is reached (2.55 g daily for immediate-release, 2.5 g for certain extended-release tablets, and 2 g for others).
Dosage Titration (Children 10–16 years)	Dosage may be increased by 500 mg at weekly intervals until desired response or a maximum dosage of 2 g daily in 2 divided doses is reached.
Maximizing Tolerance	Advice individuals to take metformin during or immediately after meals. Consider dividing doses if tolerability is an issue.
Addressing Complaints	Manage common complaints such as diarrhea and nausea by temporary dose reduction. If odor of the drug is a problem, consider switching brands or generics.
GI Tolerance Issues	If GI symptoms persist, consider using 5-HT3-antagonists like ondansetron or treating underlying Helicobacter pylori infection if present.
Insufficient Dose Tolerance	Even lower doses can improve glucose control. Consider combining metformin with another agent if necessary.
Interrupted Therapy	If therapy is interrupted, consider a full titration when restarting. Lower the dose and increase slowly if adverse effects occur upon restarting.

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