



**The Three Biggest Mistakes
People Taking Ozempic® Make
- Don't Let This Happen to You**

Hi there!

I'm Dr. Hurst, and I've been a board-certified internist for over 20 years, spending most of my career at the Mayo Clinic. I've taken care of thousands of patients who want to lose weight, and I'm excited about the new weight loss medications like Ozempic®. But, I also know that a lot of people aren't using Ozempic® in a way that improves their health. I'm also concerned that people may lose weight on Ozempic®-like medications, but they will just regain their lost weight when they stop the medication.

But before I get to that, let's talk about the most important reason people are gaining weight.

Why has Unhealthy Weight Become such a Common Problem?

In over 25 years as a physician, the most common health problem I've seen is that my patients are not able to lose weight and keep it off. These patients know they would be healthier and happier if they could lose weight (more specifically, fat).

And yet, they just can't do it.

Either they can't lose weight. Or they can, but it just comes back. Often with a vengeance.

And their reasons for why they can't lose weight cover the spectrum from self-blame (*I don't have the motivation or willpower; I know I eat too much*) to blaming everything but them (*everyone in my family is fat and my metabolism is slow*) and everything in between. Countless people have told me, *"I can't figure it out. I eat pretty well, I'm active, and I can't lose weight."*

And for most of my career, I didn't know what to tell them. Sometimes I would say something meaningless, like, "You just need to eat less and move more." (I'm embarrassed, but I was trying to offer something helpful.) But usually, I would simply empathize and let them know they weren't alone in this struggle – many of my patients had the same issue.

However, now I know why so many are struggling with their weight.

And it's a reason I've never heard a patient voice when asked about why they can't lose weight – yet it's the same reason for virtually every person struggling to lose weight.

The answer is bigger than just wanting to lose a few pounds or look good at the pool. In fact, I believe this is the biggest problem in healthcare. It's the primary reason why we are suffering from epidemics of chronic disease and dying too young.

And if you understand it, you will not only be in the best position to lose weight, but more importantly, you will be in the best position to transform your health and live the life you want to live. Medications like Ozempic® can be an excellent part of the strategy that treats the biggest problem in healthcare – and addresses the most common barrier to lasting weight loss: **Insulin resistance**



The Basics of Insulin Resistance

What is insulin?

Insulin is a hormone that we need to live. It gets energy into our muscles and critical organs so they can do their job, but it also is our fat storage hormone.



What is insulin resistance?

Insulin resistance is a negative feedback loop that occurs when your body's cells become less responsive to insulin. This leads to higher levels of insulin, which leads to even more insulin resistance.

Why is insulin resistance bad?

Insulin resistance is the first step towards – and the foundation of – diabetes. However, insulin resistance is also a primary driver for heart disease, cancer, dementia, stroke, and unhealthy weight or obesity.

What do I need to know about insulin resistance?

It's critically important to understand three things about insulin resistance if you are struggling with weight loss.

1. If your insulin levels are high, it's impossible to lose fat.
2. Insulin resistance means your insulin levels are too high.
3. You can't lose fat until you do two things:
 - a. Lower your insulin levels.
 - b. Fix your insulin resistance.

How do I know if I have insulin resistance?

If you have ANY of the following, you likely have insulin resistance:

1. You have too much fat, in particular, too much fat around your belly.
2. You have type 2 diabetes or prediabetes.
3. You have low HDL cholesterol or high triglycerides.
4. You have high blood pressure.
5. You're not physically active.
6. You eat a diet with highly processed foods.
7. You have polycystic ovarian syndrome.
8. You have a history of gestational diabetes.

But what if you have one of these things, yet your blood sugar (glucose) and hemoglobin A1c are normal?

Unfortunately, you still may be insulin resistant. An excellent way to test this is to do a “sugar stress test” called an oral glucose tolerance test. You may find that while your blood sugar levels are normal, your body must generate a lot of insulin to keep the blood sugars in the normal range.

In other words, you are insulin resistant.



Are Weight Loss Medications like Ozpemic® Right for Me?

They very well could be. But the medication alone isn't likely to yield the results you're seeking. Read on if:

- You've tried to lose weight – many times, and it just hasn't worked. Or hasn't worked for long.
- You want the best opportunity to lose weight – AND keep it off.
- You want the peace of mind of knowing you have taken control of your health.
- You're intrigued by the new weight loss medications like Ozempic®, but you want to use them wisely and safely.
- You want more than to “just lose weight.” You want to be able to travel and participate in the activities you love with friends and family. You want the stamina and energy you used to have.

If these sound like you, here are the three biggest mistakes you need to avoid if you want to improve your health and achieve lasting weight loss.

Mistake #1 – You're only focused on weight loss.

Let me be direct. If you do what almost everyone else does who wants to lose weight, then you are going to get what almost everyone else gets – you're going to regain the weight back in the long run.

Lasting weight loss is not easy.

Did you know you're more likely to quit smoking or give up a heroin addiction than lose 5% of your body weight and keep it off?

That's astonishing, right? But, you know, actually it's not even close. About 60% of people who are smokers – or heroin addicts – eventually quit and recover.

Lasting weight loss is much rarer. In one study, of more than 175,000 people who were followed for nine years, the chances that someone who was significantly overweight becoming normal weight was less than 1% per year. And even a 5% weight loss (for someone who is 200 lbs., this would be 10 pounds) happened in less than 15% of people per year.

It's not like people aren't trying; half of adults try to lose weight each year. And, unfortunately, most of them fail.

You likely know this from personal experience, but you also know this from just looking around. Despite half of our society trying to lose weight each year, more than 70% of us are overweight.

So, maybe you're thinking, *"Ok, then what's the point of trying to lose weight when almost everyone fails?"*

If that sounds like you, I understand, but the truth is, you haven't failed to lose weight because you lack motivation, you're lazy or you have "bad" genes.

You didn't lose weight because most weight loss programs and diets – and even Ozempic®-type medications – often set you up to fail. You didn't even have a fighting chance.



So what can I do about it?

People who lose weight and keep it off know something that most of us don't – there is a proven way to achieve lasting weight loss that has nothing to do with one-size fits-all extreme diets, over-exercising, calorie restriction, "portion control," meal "replacements," fat-burning injections, or Dr. Oz's latest "miracle" weight loss supplement.

Those will set you up to fail. And so can Ozempic®.

But there is a strategy that underlies all lasting weight loss strategies, and I learned this from my patients.

Early in my career, I started to recognize that a few of my patients were able to lose weight and keep it off. For years. For some, decades.

So, I started asking every patient I saw who lost weight and kept it off over the long run how they did it – and I learned a seemingly subtle, but profound difference between those who achieved lasting weight loss and those who did not.

What I learned is that we've had it backward. I, and many of my patients who have failed at lasting weight loss believed that you have to lose weight to get healthier.



But what I learned from those who achieved lasting weight loss was, you get healthier to lose weight.

When I started thinking about this, it made sense. Focusing on weight loss keeps you on the hamster wheel. You keep cycling through temporary weight-loss strategies that may work for a bit, but not for long.

However, focusing on your health – eating nutritious food that fits your metabolism, being physically active, getting restorative sleep, managing stress, avoiding toxins, making sure your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar/insulin levels are optimized – not only lowers your risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, and dementia, but it also has the best side effect – lasting weight loss.

The choice is yours. You can continue to focus on weight loss and get what most people get.

Or you can do what REALLY works – focus on your health. If you need evidence that focusing on your health is the most effective way to lose weight and keep it off, do what I did. Just ask anyone you know who has lost weight and kept it off how they did it.



Mistake #2 – Not Paying Attention to Your Muscle Mass

We don't really want "weight loss."

Well, we do, but to be more specific, what we really want to accomplish is fat loss. Because, while we tend to focus on the number on the weight scale, an important part of our weight is our muscle mass. Low muscle mass is a strong risk factor for poor health and frailty.

If your goal is a long healthy life, you don't want to lose muscle, because frailty is NOT your preferred destination.

The reason this is important is that some research shows muscle mass loss with

Ozempic® might be much more than we would want.

Studies have shown that muscle mass loss caused by Ozempic® may be as high as 40% of the total weight lost.

I'm particularly concerned about muscle loss with these medicines because, while I want my patients who want to lose weight to achieve their goals, I also want them to be healthier. If you're taking a medicine that leads to a large amount of muscle loss, I don't think they will end up better off in the long run.

I talk to all my patients who opt for Ozempic®-like medications about this concern for muscle loss and emphasize that my goal for them is NOT just weight loss. My goal for this is always better health. That means a better goal than weight loss is improving body composition, which often means losing fat while maintaining or even building muscle.

If you are considering taking Ozempic®-type medications, you need to pay attention to your muscle mass. I encourage all my patients who start these medications to also get a DEXA scan for body composition to assess their muscle mass. Then we work with these patients to include individualized weight-bearing exercises and strength training. Lastly, we also emphasize the importance of getting enough protein, especially when considering the decrease in appetite and calories caused by these medications.

Mistake #3 – You don't have a plan to get off Ozempic®

The exciting news about the Ozempic®-type medications is the impressive weight loss – about 15% of body weight in one year is average. And, we know most will maintain that weight loss over the second year.

But, what happens if you stop the medication?

You're probably not surprised that weight is regained, but you might be surprised at how much.

Overall, about 2/3 of weight loss is regained in the next year after stopping the medication. But the results are even more dismal for those who lost less than 10% of their body weight. They regained almost all of their lost weight back.

This is really valuable information because if you're taking Ozempic® for weight loss, it's critical that you have a plan for how you're going to get off the medication – and not regain the weight you lost.

So, what's wrong with taking Ozempic® indefinitely?

Well, I'm guessing you can think of one right off the bat.



It costs a lot to take Ozempic® - close to \$1,000 a month or more than \$1,300 for the weight loss version (Wegovy®).

We've already talked about the concerns with muscle mass loss on these medications. Can you imagine what happens to your long-term health if you end up years later with very little muscle because of the medication you're taking? Yes, you may be skinny, but you certainly wouldn't be healthier.

And then the big one: we don't know what the long-term effects of these medications will be.

Maybe there won't be any long-term negative effects - but, then again, why would you take that chance if you didn't have to?

As a physician who is dedicated to my patients' long, healthy life, the idea that a medication I prescribe leaves them in worse health in the long run terrifies me.

That's why I have a conversation with every patient who is considering Ozempic®-type medications about how we will eventually get them off the medication without regaining weight.



Here's the strategy I recommend:

1. Start the medication at low dose.
2. Increase the dose thoughtfully and stop when the patient is getting results.
The goal is the minimal effective dose.
3. Get a baseline assessment of body composition, including muscle mass.
The typical body composition scales (impedance devices) are reasonable,

but also quite variable and can be difficult to assess over time. In my experience, DEXA for body composition is the most reliable measure of body composition.

4. Start a plan to ensure you maintain as much muscle as possible. This plan should focus on strength training and adequate protein intake.
5. Follow your body composition results over time – ideally with a DEXA scan in 6 to 12 months.
6. Set the intention to be off the medication or at least start to lower the dose in 6 – 24 months, depending on the results.

We are in a new era of weight loss, and it's an exciting time for people who have struggled with their weight. For the first time in history, we have very effective medications that lead to weight loss, and at least in the short-term, are mostly well-tolerated and safe.

But it would be a mistake to label these medications “miracles” just yet. There are some concerning signs that need to be watched closely, and it's important to point out again, the ultimate goal is not just weight loss. If you lose the weight and end up with poor health, you've been done a disservice. It can't be either/or – you have to maintain your health – and ideally improve it.

If you are also focused on your health, and you would like the opportunity to work with us at HealthspanMD® to lose weight, get healthier, and have it paid for by insurance, here's how we can help.





Schedule a consultation with our HealthspanMD® Weight Loss Program

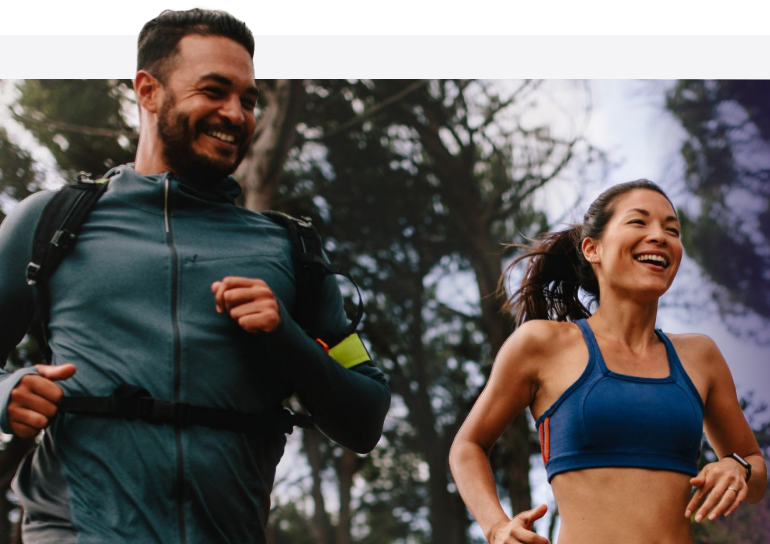
The **HealthspanMD® Weight Loss Program** gives you the information, strategy, and tactics you need to lose weight, but also to get healthier.

And the best part is the program is covered by Medicare and most insurance plans.

The HealthspanMD® Weight Loss Program includes:

- An expert consultation with a physician to review your health history, laboratory data, and test results.
- An evaluation of the **potential causes of your weight issues** and a determination of the best opportunities to improve your weight/body composition and lower your risk of health problems in the future.
- A detailed strategy of your best **opportunities to improve your weight and health**, specifically addressing the factors research has shown can reduce health problems by greater than 80% more than medicines and procedures alone.
- Enrollment in an ongoing, connected program (paid for by Medicare and most insurance) with our team of experts to **optimize your chances of losing weight** and getting healthier. In this program, we will specifically address:
 - o What is the best nutrition system for your health goals?
 - o What are the safest and most effective exercises that will help you achieve your best health?
 - o How do sleep, stress, and alcohol impact your weight, health and future risk for disease?
 - o What are the optimal numbers for blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar to support your weight loss goals and for avoiding heart attack, stroke, heart failure, and dementia?

The **HealthspanMD® Weight Loss Program** is healthcare as it should be – combining expert medical care with a comprehensive and connected team approach – **paid for by Medicare and most commercial insurance** –to give people the best chance to lose weight, keep it off, and get healthier in the process.



How can I get started?

Partner with a doctor and expert healthcare team today. Learn how our comprehensive and connected approach to care gives you the guidance and support you need to achieve lasting results. Call or click to book today.

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