

# Liraglutide for weight management in children

## Information for children, families and carers

We have given you this factsheet because your child's doctor has recommended that they start a medication called liraglutide to help manage their weight. It explains what liraglutide is, and what the potential benefits and risks of taking it are. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our team.

### What is liraglutide?

Liraglutide (also known by the brand name Saxenda®) is a medication that is used for weight management in children and adults.

Liraglutide is also used for management of type 2 diabetes in children and adults.

### How does liraglutide work?

After eating, your child's body produces a hormone called glucagon-like peptide 1 (GLP-1). This hormone sends signals to their brain and stomach to make them feel full.

Liraglutide is a protein that mimics the action of the hormone GLP-1, but to a stronger degree. It works slowly around the day to make your child feel less hungry. If taken over a long period of time, liraglutide will alter your child's appetite and they will feel full more quickly after having a meal or a snack, which will result in weight loss.

Liraglutide will also cause your child's body to produce extra amounts of insulin during mealtimes. This will reduce the high blood sugar levels that can happen after a meal, which will lower your child's risk of developing diabetes in the future.

### What are the benefits of liraglutide?

In children and young people, liraglutide can:

- reduce their feelings of hunger
- alter their appetite to make them feel full more quickly after meals and snacks

- prevent high blood sugar levels after meals
- help with weight loss over time

Liraglutide can also:

- (in adults) prevent the development of heart diseases due to excess weight
- (in adults) reduce complications of fatty liver disease
- (in children and adults) help prevent prediabetes turning into diabetes

## Are there any risks or side effects?

Liraglutide is very well tolerated by most children and young people. However, as with all medications, there are some potential side effects, including:

- stomach-ache
- diarrhoea (your child should take lots of small sips of water to keep hydrated)
- nausea (feeling sick)
- vomiting (being sick)
- heartburn (acid reflux)

These side effects are common when children first start taking liraglutide, but they tend to settle down after a few weeks. To help ease these side effects, we recommend that your child follows the advice below for the first few weeks:

- your child should eat smaller portions
- your child should slowly increase their dose of liraglutide (according to their doctor's instructions) to allow their body time to adapt to the medication

There are also a few rare side effects of liraglutide, including:

- gallstones (small stones, usually made of cholesterol, that form in the gallbladder)
- inflammation of the gallbladder
- acute pancreatitis (a condition where the pancreas becomes swollen over a short period of time)

These rare side effects are mostly seen in adults who have other health conditions. Your child's doctor will assess your child's own risks before they start taking the medication. This assessment may include your child having an ultrasound scan (a procedure that uses high-frequency sound waves to create an image of part of the inside of the body).

If after starting liraglutide your child starts to experience a strong tummy pain that won't go away, you should stop the liraglutide injections and contact us for advice. If your child's symptoms are severe, take your child to your nearest emergency department or call **111** for advice straight away.

## How is liraglutide given?

### Pre-filled injection pens

Liraglutide comes in the form of pre-filled injection pens. Please be aware that there are different brands of liraglutide, each with its own pen device and doses. To make sure your child receives the correct medication, always check that the brand you receive from your pharmacy is **Saxenda®**.

We will show you and your child how to use the injection pens. Before giving your child their first injection of liraglutide, please also watch this video on how to use the Saxenda® pen:

[www.saxenda.com/about-saxenda/how-to-use-the-pen.html](http://www.saxenda.com/about-saxenda/how-to-use-the-pen.html)

### Doses

Your child will need to have one injection of liraglutide a day.

Your child will start at a dose of 0.6mg of liraglutide a day. Your child's doctor will then gradually increase their dose once a week over a period of five weeks to a dose of 3mg of liraglutide a day. Your child's doctor will discuss this dosing plan with you in more detail.

### Time of injection

Liraglutide doesn't need to be given with meals. We recommend picking a time that is easy to remember, and then giving your child their injection every day at this time.

### Injection sites

The medication needs to be injected into the subcutaneous (fatty) layer of your child's skin. The best injection sites are your child's:

- tummy (at least 5cm away from their tummy button)
- thighs (at the front)

Make sure you choose a different place to inject into each time. Do not inject into the same place twice in a row. This is called 'injection site rotation' and ensures your child's skin remains healthy after each injection.

### Missed doses

If your child misses a dose, **do not** double up on the dose the next day. If you remember the missed dose within 12 hours of the usual time, you can still give your child their injection. However, if more than 12 hours have passed, skip that dose and give your child their next dose at the usual time.

### Storage

Unopened pens should be stored in a refrigerator. Once opened, keep the pen in a refrigerator or at room temperature for up to a month. It can be useful to keep it by your bedside or in a place that reminds you to give your child their injection every day.

## Metformin

If your child is taking metformin (another medication used in weight management), they should continue taking metformin alongside liraglutide. The combined effect of these two medications is stronger than each of them alone.

## How should I dispose of used equipment?

Your child will receive a regular supply of pens, needles and sharps bins from your local hospital with each prescription.

Item	How to dispose of it
Empty pens	These can be disposed of in your regular household waste (they are not yet recyclable).
Any pens that still contain medication	These should be returned to your local pharmacy for safe disposal.
Needles	These should be discarded in a sharps bin. Your local council can arrange disposal of the sharps bin when full, and you can request a referral from your child's GP or local hospital team to arrange this.

## Is there anything else my child needs to do when taking liraglutide?

Although liraglutide will reduce your child's body fat, it is important that they continue to have a healthy balanced diet and exercise regularly to help build muscle and maintain their body weight.

Your child should also keep hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids. This will help reduce their feelings of hunger, but it will also replace any fluids they lose from the early side effects of liraglutide (such as diarrhoea).

## Contraception and pregnancy

The effects of liraglutide on an unborn baby are unknown. If your child is sexually active, we advise that they use suitable contraception to prevent pregnancy. For more information on contraception, speak to your child's doctor or nurse.

If you know or think that your child might be pregnant, please contact us for advice as soon as possible.

## How long will my child need to take liraglutide for?

Your child will need to take liraglutide until they reach their target weight (this will be agreed with their doctor). How long this takes will be different for each child.

Some children who manage to lose a significant amount of weight are able to stop taking liraglutide without gaining weight back, as their metabolism has permanently changed. However, other children who stop taking liraglutide after losing weight may then gain some of this weight back. Your child's doctor will discuss an individual plan for your child with you.

## How do I order more liraglutide?

When your child only has one month's supply of liraglutide left (five pens of Saxenda®), please contact your local hospital to order a repeat prescription. If your local hospital is Southampton Children's Hospital, please contact us by phone or email to order a repeat prescription. You will be given the option to collect your child's prescription from our outpatient pharmacy or have it delivered to your home address.

## Further information

For further information, please contact your child's healthcare professional or GP.

## Useful links

[www.saxenda.co.uk](http://www.saxenda.co.uk)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/obesity/treatment](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/obesity/treatment)

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well)

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-guidelines/physical-activity-guidelines-children-and-young-people](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-guidelines/physical-activity-guidelines-children-and-young-people)

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

[www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenshospital](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenshospital)

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