

Eli Lilly Launches Website to Sell Weight Loss Drugs Directly to Patients



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On January 4, 2024, Eli Lilly (Lilly) announced the launch of a new website that make will easier for patients to obtain prescriptions for weight loss drugs, without ever having to leave their homes. The new website, LillyDirect, will connect patients to Form Health, a telehealth platform where physicians will determine the medical necessity of prescription weight loss medication, including Lilly's recently approved drug, Zepbound. Ozempic, Wegovy and now Zepbound, belong to the same class of drug, commonly called GLP-1 agonists that work by reducing blood sugar and suppressing appetite. GLP-1 drugs are generally not covered by health insurance and can cost upward of \$1,000 per month. While the decision on which medication to prescribe, if any, ultimately rests with the Physician, patients who are prescribed Zepbound will be eligible for at-home prescription delivery service through the manufacturer's digital pharmacy. LillyDirect, joins a growing list of direct-to-consumer telehealth startups that offer weight loss drugs through telehealth, but is the first pharmaceutical manufacturer to do so. On the same day Lilly announced the website launch, the company also published an open letter taking a stand against "cosmetic" use of its weight loss drugs.

Critics have emphasized there is no replacement to a healthy diet and regular exercise, and that the risk of addiction, dependency or misuse associated with weight loss drugs should not be ignored. Despite the long-term unknown side effects, the demand for weight loss drugs is expected to exponentially grow in 2024. The allure of diet and exercise reduced to a "magic shot" is undeniable, even if that perception is not reality.

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