

Popular Appetite Suppressant Ozempic Can Be Made For Less Than \$5 a Month, New Research Suggests

Ozempic, the appetite-suppressing injection also known as semaglutide, currently costs \$935.77 in the U.S. without insurance. But a new research report from Yale University, King's College Hospital in London, and Doctors Without Borders published in JAMA Network Open Wednesday suggests that the price of the prescription drug could be lowered to a fraction of what it is right now, while still generating a profit.

The researchers calculated cost-based prices for one month of Ozempic, administered as an injectable of 0.77 mg weekly, by combining commercial trade shipment data from January 1, 2016 to March 31, 2023 with the cost of creating the drug, other operating expenses, a profit margin, and tax. They found that the cost-based prices of Ozempic ranged from \$0.89 to \$4.73 per month.

"The findings of this study suggest that insulins, SGLT2Is, and GLP1As can likely be manufactured for prices far below current prices, enabling wider access," the researchers wrote.

A pharmacist holds a box of Novo Nordisk A/S Ozempic brand semaglutide medication. Photographer: George Frey/Bloomberg via Getty Images

Ozempic costs less outside of the U.S. – a Bloomberg report found that a month's supply of the injectable costs under \$300 in Mexico.

"Outside the US, countries have different regulatory requirements with regard to the pricing of medicines, including negotiating with respective government entities," Ozempic maker Novo Nordisk told Bloomberg.

Related: FDA Has Seized 'Thousands' of Fake Units of Ozempic Amid Reported Cases of 'Adverse Reactions' in Patients

Drug markups have long come under national scrutiny, with

Martin Shkreli, the former head of Turing Pharmaceuticals, forced to pay \$64 million in 2022 after inflating the price of a life-saving drug by 4,000%.

Ozempic falls under the category of a GLP-1 drug, meaning that it addresses type 2 diabetes by improving blood sugar control and also potentially leading to weight loss, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Prescriptions of GLP-1 drugs increased by 300% between 2020 and 2022, Trilliant Health researchers found. Ozempic first made headlines in 2021 when it was featured on the *Dr. Oz Show*.

Related: Novo Nordisk, the Maker of Ozempic, Is Suing Spas and Clinics For Allegedly Selling Knockoffs

Ozempic and other similar drugs could cause an average weight loss of 15% to 20%, “significantly higher than previous options,” as per Columbia Surgery.

The same publication warns of the life-long commitment Ozempic requires, as discontinuing the drug could lead to gaining all of the weight back. The drug could also cause nausea, cramps, and other unpleasant side effects.

Despite the high cost and potential downsides, Ozempic skyrocketed in popularity last year, with 66% of its more than \$13 billion sales coming from the US, according to Novo Nordisk’s 2023 annual report.

Related: Novo Nordisk Is Worth More Than Denmark’s GDP Thanks to America’s Ozempic and Wegovy Craze

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