

\$1500 a month? Breakthrough obesity injection Wegovy (semaglutide) approved by the FDA — but high costs and limited insurance coverage likely to limit adoption

When a promising new drug to treat obesity was approved by the Food and Drug Administration for sale in the U.S. [recently], it was the first such treatment to gain approval since 2014.

In clinical trials, weekly injections of semaglutide — or [Wegovy, as it's been branded](#) — helped people drop an average of 15% of their body weight. That's [an average of about 34 pounds over 16 months](#), before their weight plateaued — roughly triple what's achieved with other drugs on the market. At least as important, Wegovy raised none of the alarm bells with the FDA or obesity doctors that it might trigger serious side effects of the sort some people experienced by taking [fen-phen or other previous medical treatments](#) for obesity.

But with a price tag for Wegovy of \$1,000 to \$1,500 a month, a big question remains: Will insurers cover its significant cost?

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“There’s a medical component to [obesity] that needs to be recognized; this is a disease state like we should be treating any other disease state,” [Novo Nordisk executive vice president Douglas] Langa says. He says about 40% of private insurers cover Saxenda, the similar weight-loss medication the company makes.

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