



# From High Holidays to High Confidence:

## Ozempic and Surgery Combat Holiday Overindulgence

*By Jeremy White*

The Jewish holidays are coming to a close and, as usual, I ate way too much! It is important to enjoy time with the family, but can be challenging when bombarded constantly with a cornucopia of delicious delights. Usually this is the time of year that I try to remind myself to get more exercise and choose wisely which treats are worth consuming. It's also the juncture when we get the most phone calls asking about weight loss and body contouring. A healthy, well balanced diet and a steady exercise routine are still the best ways to lose weight and keep it off. The problem is that it often becomes more difficult to remain weight stable as we age. When we enter our forties, not only are we in the busiest time of life with regard to work and family balance, but our genetics start to work against us! A new study



from Stanford University demonstrated on a molecular level that our bodies may not age at the same rate through the years. There is a steep decline in our forties in our ability to metabolize fats and alcohol. In our sixties, there was a steeper decline noticed in our ability to metabolize

carbohydrates, but you probably already saw that one coming. So what do we do when our usual weight maintenance routines no longer work for us?

For most people, this means that they just need to put more effort into their already healthy habits. Others, however, may have noticed that they still need extra help despite their increased lifestyle vigilance. In the past, many have tried extreme diets and medications like hCG, but these diets have been difficult to maintain consistently given the strictness of calorie restriction and the lack of energy that comes with it. In come Ozempic (semaglutide), Mounjaro (tirzepatide), and other GLP-1 class weight loss drugs. They have completely revolutionized our ability to lose weight and keep it off. I have been treating patients with these once weekly weight



loss shots for more than a year and I have been extremely impressed by patients' ability to lose weight, maintain high energy levels, and live normal lives.

**Are these medications safe?**

Yes, these medications result in safe, controlled lowering of blood sugar and decreased appetite. People also feel full faster on these medications because stomach movement slows down. As with all medications, there are potential side effects. Most commonly these involve gastrointestinal symptoms like constipation or diarrhea, but these tend to improve rapidly once you find the right dose. Having a side effect that is persistent enough to discontinue the medication is uncommon (5% or less in many studies). These are still prescription medications so it is important that the weight loss process is supervised by a knowledgeable and responsive physician. They have a safe track record and have been in use for almost 20 years, just now they are helping us lose weight in addition to other health benefits.

**Can I use it for just a short time to get me back on track?**

Yes, some patients just need a boost to get back on track with their health after a long vacation. Some have used the medication for a few months, reached their goal weight

while adjusting to healthier lifestyle choices, and kept that weight off without the medication. Still some others will need the medication at some level to keep the weight off, with the opportunity to wean off of it slowly over time. It is never unsafe to stop these medications!

**Is it ethical to use a medication for weight loss that might be in shortage for diabetics in need?**

These medications are widely available in generic form and produced at specialty pharmacies around the country. There are also specific brand name formulations for weight loss patients.

**Are there any aesthetic downsides to these medications?**

Patients feel great on these medications and there are many health benefits to weight loss, but when people lose tremendous amounts of weight, that can also lead to fat loss in the face, which is not always desirable. Fortunately, fat grafting and an array of fillers are often great options to restore the volume of youth. Younger people who lose weight slowly tend to have their skin bounce back more easily. As we get into our forties, however, sagging neck skin tends to become more of a problem and natural appearing amounts of filler are not going to solve it. This is when you really need

to explore minimally invasive procedures or traditional surgical options like facelifts and neck lifts. The same goes for loose skin on the abdomen and arms, which typically would benefit from skin removal via abdominoplasty and brachioplasty.

**Can I lose weight with liposuction?**

It is a common misconception to think that liposuction will cause weight loss. Weight loss medications help you shrink the fat that is both superficial and behind your abdominal muscles (visceral fat). Liposuction can not remove visceral fat and is not supposed to remove all of the fat from a particular area. This minimally invasive procedure is designed to contour and reduce stubborn pockets of fat through small incisions to improve your body shape. Liposuction fat removal is permanent but, if you do not maintain a steady weight, the remaining fat cells can enlarge again.

At the end of the day, we should enjoy life and try to live with healthy habits and balance. We should enjoy treats now and then, but all in moderation. For those of us who are still frustrated by difficulty in losing weight or are looking to reduce some stubborn fat, know that there are many safe and wonderful options available.