FDA orders eye warnings on GLP-1 drugs

LEVEL B2


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I. WARM-UP

1. Have you ever read a medicine label carefully? Why or why not?
2. What side effects would make you stop a treatment?
3. How much do you know about eye health and vision loss?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

regulator
an official authority that makes and enforces rules for safety or quality

manufacturer
a company that makes a product, especially on a large scale

label
the printed information on a product's packaging

blindness
the loss of sight, partly or completely

optic
relating to the eye or to vision

disorder
a medical problem that affects how a body part works

risk
the chance that something bad may happen

side effect
an unwanted extra effect that a medicine has on your body

III. READING

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the national regulator, has told manufacturers of GLP-1 weight-loss drugs to add a warning about a rare eye disorder linked to sudden blindness.

The new label will cover GLP-1 drugs such as Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro and Zepbound, and will mention non-arteritic anterior ischaemic optic neuropathy (NAION), which happens when blood flow to the optic nerve is blocked. The condition can cause painless loss of vision in one eye, and it may be permanent.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology said any added risk appears small, and it has not been proved these medicines cause NAION. Novo Nordisk, which makes Wegovy, also said current data do not show a cause-and-effect link, but it will keep monitoring safety.

A safety arm of the European Medicines Agency has said up to 1 in 10,000 people taking semaglutide may be affected. A US study of 17,000 patients found those on semaglutide were four times more likely to be diagnosed with NAION. GLP-1 drugs already warn about pancreatitis and gallbladder disease. Common side effects of semaglutide include nausea, vomiting and stomach pain.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News***: "Makers of GLP-1 drugs ordered to add warnings...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Who ordered the new eye-warning labels on GLP-1 drugs?
2. Which products will the new label cover?
3. What is NAION and what can it cause?
4. What do the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Novo Nordisk say about causation?
5. What two figures are given about how often NAION may occur?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should strong side-effect warnings change how people use these drugs?
2. How much certainty should regulators need before adding a warning?
3. What advice would you give a friend worried about vision risks?
4. Are medicine labels clear enough in your country? How could they improve?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Wish / if only

Wish / If only express regrets or desired changes. Forms: wish/if only + past simple (now), wish + past perfect (past regret), wish + would + base verb (change in someone/something).

"Patients **wish they had spoken** *to a doctor before stopping."*

*"***If only the warning were** *clearer on the label."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete the gaps with wish/if only forms: past, past perfect, or would.

1. Patients wish they (read) ___ the leaflet yesterday. _____
2. I wish I already (know) ___ my eye test results. _____
3. If only the nausea (go) ___ away soon. _____
4. She wishes she (book) ___ an eye test last year. _____
5. If only researchers (find) ___ a clear cause now. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 12–15 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or check: GLP-1 (as a type of drug), label, regulator, optic nerve, vision loss, side effect.
- Run the reading in two passes: gist (who, what, which drugs), then detail (NAION mechanism, figures, positions of the academy and Novo Nordisk). The topic involves serious illness and potential blindness, so start discussion in pairs and allow students to speak about the news rather than personal medical histories.
- Differentiation: Stronger students summarise each stakeholder's view (FDA, academy, manufacturer); others match claims to sources using lines drawn on the page.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Poll the class first (yes/no/maybe), then pair students from different camps to exchange reasons.
2. List possible evidence levels on the board (studies, reviews, expert bodies) to guide answers.
3. Elicit practical steps (read labels, call a doctor, watch symptoms) before sharing in groups.
4. Project a sample label; ask students to rewrite one warning to be shorter and clearer.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In two teams, prepare and deliver 90-second statements for or against adding the NAION warning.

Writing: Write a 100-word patient leaflet paragraph explaining NAION in plain language and what to do.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Wish / if only

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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These answers are for teachers only. Please do not share this page with students.


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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Who ordered the new eye-warning labels on GLP-1 drugs?
   The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
2. Which products will the new label cover?
   GLP-1 drugs such as Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro and Zepbound.
3. What is NAION and what can it cause?
   Blocked blood flow to the optic nerve; painless vision loss that may be permanent.
4. What do the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Novo Nordisk say about causation?
   Both say it has not been shown that the drugs cause NAION; the academy adds that any added risk seems small.
5. What two figures are given about how often NAION may occur?
   Up to 1 in 10,000 on semaglutide; a study found people were four times more likely.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Wish / If only express regrets or desired changes. Forms: wish/if only + past simple (now), wish + past perfect (past regret), wish + would + base verb (change in someone/something). (Examples constructed.)

> *"Patients* **wish they had spoken** *to a doctor before stopping."*
>
> *"***If only the warning were** *clearer on the label."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete the gaps with wish/if only forms: past, past perfect, or would.

1. Patients wish they ___ the leaflet yesterday. **had read**
2. I wish I already ___ my eye test results. **knew**
3. If only the nausea ___ away soon. **would go**
4. She wishes she ___ an eye test last year. **had booked**
5. If only researchers ___ a clear cause now. **found / would find**