

MY EXPERIENCES WITH GLP-1'S

And Other Peptides

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NOTE: I KEEP UPDATING THIS AS I LEARN MORE. SEE DATE ABOVE.

A friend recommended one of the new GLP-1 injections, tirzepatide (brand name Zepbound), touting it as a miracle drug. Tirzepatide and semaglutide (Ozempic) have become extremely popular for weight loss, especially in the U.S. The problem is that the name brand versions can be over a thousand dollars a month if your insurance doesn't cover it, and it usually doesn't for weight loss (but might for diabetes, and a recent Trump initiative might expand coverage and reduce prices). Since pharmaceutical companies weren't able to keep up with the demand, compounding pharmacies were allowed to formulate them, for much lower prices, although still too expensive for many people. Now, the pharmaceutical companies say they can meet demand, but the compounding pharmacies and companies who market their products are still in business, at least for now. RFK, Jr., a fan of peptides (GLP-1's are peptides—the "P" stands for "peptide"), might keep them available.

According to AI:

Peptides are short chains of two or more amino acids that act as fundamental building blocks for proteins. They regulate biological functions, including metabolism, tissue repair, and hormone production, such as insulin. They function as signaling molecules, telling cells to perform specific tasks like producing collagen or reducing inflammation. Naturally occurring peptides are in the body, while synthetic peptides are used in medications. While generally considered safe, some synthetic peptide supplements lack long-term studies.

I was reluctant to try GLP-1's. A majority of people who take off weight don't keep it off, but after losing weight with GLP-1's, it comes back four times faster. That means that one needs to stay on at least a small maintenance dose for a long time, maybe for the rest of your life, to avoid having your hunger come roaring back. My impression is that peptides are relatively benign compared to many pharmaceuticals, assuming that one has a pure source and is dosing properly (more isn't necessarily better). If you're going to have side effects (with GLP-1's, they're usually digestive), they tend to happen in the first month. Still, one never knows, and committing to the high monthly expense maybe indefinitely was concerning. Like so many overweight people, I felt that I should have the discipline to take it off without drugs, but after months of not doing that, I decided to try tirzepatide.

My friend had purchased his through FuturHealth. He had been paying \$300/month. I contacted them. As was the case with countless gray-market tirzepatide and semaglutide sellers in the U.S. (who generally source from U.S. compounding pharmacies or Chinese peptide manufacturers), they were not transparent about what they would charge. Many start with a “membership fee” of, for example, \$697, and try to get you to pay that before even telling you what the meds will cost or even which ones you’d get. Many have “questionnaires” that are really sales pitches, “Do you want to lose weight? Have more energy?” etc., that you must answer before they’ll disclose prices. Some turned out to be different fronts for the same companies with similar copy. Some quoted a price that turned out to be only for the first month. Many have a lot of complaints about products not shipped, overcharges, and unresponsive customer service; in general, most have a shady vibe. At least FuturHealth had a phone number, and I finally got it out of the rep: It would be \$500/mo. Why different from my friend? No idea. And no thank you.

In the months I searched for a source that would be affordable and reliable, with some integrity, prices dropped as demand and competition grew. Once you search for a product, online algorithms start flooding you with ads for similar products. On Facebook, I got one for CoreAge RX, which seemed a little better, less salesy, more legit. They advertised “tirz” for \$149/mo. The fine print is that you only get that price if you pay for twelve months upfront. I bought six months for \$179/mo. (it’s now a bit less), still a lot, but cheaper than the alternatives I found.

CoreAge RX, like so many companies these days who don’t regularly answer phones, has taken days to respond to emails, and when they do, they often don’t answer your questions or engage with the actual information you give them. I received my first three month’s doses in the beginning. It then took a month of pleading with them to get them to send me the second three months’ worth. It turned out that their buggy website hadn’t processed my three-month questionnaire, and it took a couple weeks to get that straightened out. As with all bad customer service, wasting so much time on something that should have been automatic or corrected easily had they been responsive was frustrating. I ran out of the tirz and went a week without it. Not a big deal—I don’t mind taking a break from drugs or supplements, and tirzepatide stays in your system for up to four weeks—but after a week, my hunger was ramping up. One day, after eating more but by no means overeating, I was up two pounds for the first time since starting tirz, which illustrates how precarious its weight loss can be. You’d think that with their apparently huge profits, they could hire enough people to answer phone calls and emails. In any case, after taking their tirz for a few months, I can at least vouch that it’s the real thing.

When tirzepatide is working, it’s astonishing—and a relief—how little hunger I feel. I have some moments of strong hunger at night when I haven’t eaten; still, it doesn’t take much food for that to go away. Cravings for sugar are way down, and I am generally more sensitive to my actual hunger and what I need (for example, when I’d had enough citrus or need protein). I also want less in the way of condiments and salt; due to eating less, I am better able to taste and enjoy subtler flavors. With any severe calorie reduction, it’s vital to make what you do eat is as nutrient-dense and varied as possible to avoid malnourishment. Favor protein, especially early in

the day, and vitamin and mineral-rich vegetables, with enough carbs for energy and fiber (GLP-1's don't work well with very low carbs), so include some whole grains and modest amounts of fruit. I also include organic potatoes and yams with the skins, which I cut into fries. I air fry them with no more than a tablespoon of olive or sesame oil. Avoid eating too few calories over an extended period, as that can screw up your metabolism. I also take a lot of supplements, including collagen and creatine to avoid too much muscle loss.

I took my first dose on December 23, 2025; I weighed about 217 (in the prior month, I'd gotten as high as 221, matching my all-time high). As of this writing, I'm down to 182, so about 35 lbs., or 16%. That's not a super-fast weight loss but losing weight too quickly isn't a good idea. My goal is to lose about 10 more; then I'll see how I look and feel. People can typically lose over 20% of their starting weight on tirzepatide, although it varies both by dosage and one's individual body chemistry.

A study showed that .04% of tirzepatide users developed a rare eye condition called NAION and another 0.2% to 0.3% of users developed other visual disturbances. The risks are often linked to the rapid reduction of high blood sugar levels rather than the drug attacking the eye directly. So if you're starting with high blood sugar, go easy. On the other hand, research indicates that for patients with diabetes, tirzepatide may actually lower the risk of developing diabetic retinopathy compared to other diabetes medications.

With all peptides, it is wise start with a low dose to check for side effects and get used to it. At first, I didn't have much of a reduction in my appetite, but once I went from 2.5 mg to 5, it started to kick in, and at 7.5, it was too much—I could hardly eat at all some days, although it's variable. I dropped the dose back down to 6 or less. The maximum anyone might take is 15. As with all meds, it's best to take the smallest dose that still works for you. You will probably have to increase it as you build up a tolerance. When you reach your target weight, you will then reduce it to the lowest dose that keeps you from regaining it. You might then be able to wean yourself off it entirely.

One key to not regaining weight is eliminating insulin resistance, which a third of Americans have; most overweight people do to some degree. Bad cholesterol numbers are one indicator. Fasting insulin and fasting glucose tests can zero in where you are with that. Google AI: "Insulin resistance is a condition where the body's cells do not respond effectively to insulin. Because the cells fail to absorb glucose properly, the pancreas produces excess insulin to compensate. This often leads to elevated blood sugar levels and can progress to prediabetes or type 2 diabetes." Cutting way back on sugar, increasing protein, not eating at night, and weight training can all help. Dr. Dean Jones, who has several helpful peptides videos on YouTube, advocates fasting, starting with intermittent fasting leading to one-day and then two day fasts each week as the best way to eliminate that. I've never done well with fasts but with GLP-1s, it might become possible, especially if I can improve my sleep. In any case, it is clear that I will have to be careful about what I eat for the rest of my life if I am to keep it off.

I have a slow metabolism and tend to plateau often when dieting. Plateaus are common with dieting and there can be many reasons for plateaus. Weight training is often suggested to increase muscle mass, which burns more fat. I have not yet done that because I have chronic insomnia and low energy, although I often swim laps and walk. Fatigue and other forms of stress can itself cause plateaus. After doing well for a few months, I went a month only losing 3 lbs. then another losing nothing. Maybe that gave my body a chance to adjust to the previous loss. Still, I was eager to break the plateau, and I was also concerned that I had started feeling hungrier in recent weeks. I wondered whether tirzepatide was no longer working. However, my hunger is back down and I am losing again, although more slowly. (More on that below.)

Semaglutide is the first generation of GLP-1's for weight loss. Tirzepatide is second. The third is retatrutide, not yet approved by the FDA but available in the U.S. via compounding pharmacies and from China. Each generation has been better than the preceding one in that you can lose a higher percentage of your starting weight with fewer side effects. "Reta" also helps improve metabolism, a boon for avoiding plateaus.

Dr. Jones suggests starting with tirzepatide and building up to reta or eventually combining low doses of both. People actually have less food mind chatter and appetite on tirz and it can get your diet on a better footing. Reta is better for metabolic issues, fatty liver, visceral fat, and insulin resistance.

Here is one of Dr. Jones' videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYqbNDhIEPs>

Reta's metabolism booster (glucagon receptor activator) can cause an increase in heart rate. That can be helpful for cardiovascular issues (it may lower systolic blood pressure) but it can affect rhythm, a problem if you have arrhythmias or elevated baseline heart rate (which you may not be aware of). It also can drive a fight-or-flight response and affect sleep. Consider having a full heart checkup before starting reta and mentioning your plan to take it to your doctor. Also, keep doses low. With all GLP-1's, if you're eating too few calories, reduce your dosage.

Also, unlike the other two GLP-1's, reta tends to wane during the week so take a half dose twice a week rather than a full dose once. In addition, stick with more frequent small portions of food (which you'll want to do anyway) and avoid carbonated drinks with food, as there can be more nausea on reta since it's more powerful. Consider digestive enzymes and probiotics.

Pharmaceutical companies ship semaglutide and tirzepatide in pre-dosed pens. Many others ship in vials, which are less expensive. Peptides in vials are either powders or already reconstituted. You use a thin-needle diabetes-type insulin syringe, which is easy and pretty painless. Jab quickly, and inject gradually and slowly. The abdomen is the easiest site—stay two inches from your navel—but especially if you have someone to help you, you can alternate with your outer thighs, upper buttocks, and back of your upper arms. Even if you stick with your abdomen, alternating sites avoids scar tissue. For those who dislike needles, pill versions are available or in

development but are perhaps less effective, requiring slightly higher doses. They also tend to be less expensive.

If your peptides are powders, you'll also need larger, sturdier needles that can penetrate the rubber tops of the vials for injecting bacteriostatic water into the vials of powder. This will help you avoid dulling and removing some of the silicone lubricant from the insulin needle. Here's an example:

<https://amzn.to/4cBoCcU>

Inject the water at an angle so you hit the side of the glass vial rather than directly into the powder. Gently swirl if necessary, but don't shake.

With needles, higher-number gauges are thinner. For injections, you want the thinnest, shortest, and sharpest ones possible to avoid pain. Remove the plunger from the smaller insulin syringe (before purchasing, make sure that the plunger is removable) and inject the peptides into the barrel. This also allows you to combine peptides and minimize the number of injections. To give you enough room, get a 1 mL needle rather than a .3 or .5 mL. (Those with fine needles don't come in larger barrel sizes.)

These are good for injections:

<https://amzn.to/4cB0l6t>

Be careful with your arithmetic when figuring out doses. (You can do a web search for recommendations.) "ML" on a syringe stands for milliliter, the standard unit of measurement for liquid volume for medications. It is the same as a cubic centimeter (cc). The smallest markings on syringes are "units." On the smallest syringes, short lines/units typically represent 0.01 mL, but on larger ones, they can represent .02 mL all the way up to .1. To figure out your dose, you need to know how many mgs of the peptide are in your vial and how much bacteriostatic water you added to reconstitute it. Here is a calculator, plus some guides:

<https://peptidedosages.com>

Google AI says, "Biohackers are individuals who use a do-it-yourself approach to optimize their health, performance, and longevity." Many, including well-known podcasters and other health influencers, especially in the body-building world, use a variety of peptides not just for weight loss but to improve their energy and appearance, reduce pain, and other things.

Mainstream media often caution against using peptides because most lack the rigorous testing that FDA-approved medications must undergo, although GLP-1's are an exception: tirzepatide and semaglutides are FDA-approved for some applications, and retatrutide is currently undergoing massive clinical trials. There isn't the funding to do the kinds of testing on most peptides that a promising and potentially lucrative pharmaceutical would get, which can cost over a billion dollars. Therefore, all we may have for them is anecdotal evidence. I'm not as

dismissive of that as some are, although it would be better to have more data. In any case, it's vital to be educated and proceed cautiously.

In their January 26, 2026 issue, *New York Magazine* had an article, "Life on Peptides Feels Amazing—Says Everyone Who's Buying from Looksmaxxers on Instagram or AI Bots in China and Injecting Them into Their Bloodstream." (I read it on Apple News.) It detailed how people are buying peptides directly from China at vastly reduced prices, often ten percent of U.S. gray market prices, and as little as one percent of pharmaceutical companies' retail prices. (Unlike in the U.S. where you might get a single vial, most of the Chinese companies ship boxes of ten.) That addresses my problem with the expense of needing to stay on them long-term. From China, the peptides are freeze-dried powders that you reconstitute with bacteriostatic water. They keep for a long time wrapped tightly in a freezer, especially. CoreAge RX sent vials of liquid with ice packs, since they don't keep as well as the powders.

There are some other peptides I wanted to try, too, for insomnia and aches, for example. The issue is that it's hard to know that you're getting pure and safe products, or that you'll get them at all—this space is crawling with scammers. Lab tests can confirm that what's in the vial is what it says it is and whether the amount is what it claims, since it's important to be able to dose accurately. Tests can also check for contaminants, often for an additional fee.

<https://www.finnrick.com>

offers free testing and lists the results to guide people away from bad products. However, many companies I've run across aren't listed or only have one or two products tested; that will improve as they do more tests. I saw no links for the companies that received high ratings. When you google them, you might instead find scammers impersonating them, so it's tricky. Legit Chinese companies tend to be on the downlow because it is illegal there to sell retail and they probably don't even have sites. Ironically, even though Finnrick doesn't provide links, they won't test those without them in their free program. They write on their site, "Please share a public link where this vendor can be identified (website, online shop, or social media profile). Contact details that aren't public, such as WhatsApp numbers, are not acceptable." So that mostly limits their tests to U.S. providers, which are far more costly, although there are some Chinese companies on their lists.

Another testing firm, Janoshik Analytical, doesn't appear to share its results on its site but some companies cite its test results on theirs:

<https://janoshik.com/>

Social media algorithms are now flooding me with ads for Chinese peptide companies. Many only accept crypto or bank transfers, meaning that the customer has no protection as you would with a credit card. A few accept PayPal, which may be safer if it's not the friends/family option, but it's not scam-proof and there's no guarantee that PayPal will rule in your favor in a dispute since they prohibit using it to pay for peptides. If purported sellers take credit cards but are

scammers, you won't get your product and they'll sell your credit card number and other personal information.

In our increasingly Orwellian world, the gray market for Chinese peptides is especially Orwellian, where it's hard to know what information to trust; it is overrun with sincere-sounding scammers, often using AI. Even Reddit forums dedicated to sharing information are infiltrated with shills for scammers or disreputable companies. On Reddit forums, people aren't allowed to publicly share their sources. I DM'd a couple that apparently were shills. One member I DM'd recommended a company whose reputation had gotten a low grade on Finnrack; she said that competitors had sent in mislabeled vials to bring down their scores. Who knows? Would their competitors go to that much trouble? In any case, it takes a lot of research and alertness to red flags to navigate this maze. Some people do successfully order from China at great prices (now including me), but buyer beware.

Avoiding attention from the Chinese government is one reason many legit sources keep a low profile and may only accept crypto, which is untraceable (scammers usually only accept crypto because you have no way to get your money back) but some take PayPal with a surcharge (maybe 5%) or a Chinese company such as Alipay, which also offers some protection. I ended up using an international payment app based in London called "Wise." It doesn't offer direct fraud protection but by that point, I trusted the seller, and at least it didn't charge high fees and have poor exchange rates.

Some places, possibly including scammers, protest that they can't accept PayPal because they had too many orders during Chinese New Year and they lost a lot of money. That sounded lame—why would they lose money if people got their orders and didn't dispute charges? However, it turns out that the Chinese government strictly regulates PayPal and how much it can be used, and everything stops for several days in China during the New Year's celebration. Therefore, suddenly companies exceeded their limit once resuming business and the piled-up orders came in. In addition, it's not just the sellers who can be scammers—some customers buy and receive products, and then dispute the purchase with PayPal with false claims; the sellers can't protest because PayPal prohibits using it for peptides. There have always been scammers but the internet has provided an especially fertile breeding ground for them.

So far, I've seen minimum shipping charges of about \$45 to \$80 for up to 1 kg (2.2 pounds), so if you want to test a supplier with a small order, your shipping cost might be as expensive as the products, or more, but it might be a prudent choice.

This is what finally got me past all these hurdles so that I placed an order: On a Reddit thread, an Australian named Jack invited me into a private Telegram group made up of people like me who were tearing their hair out trying to find a legit supplier. It has been very helpful.

There's a couple of clearinghouses for global sourcing (for companies that want to buy overseas). One is called Global Sources (Jack: "where the gray market lives"). It lists hundreds

of Chinese peptide producers and resellers. Some are “verified” but that doesn’t mean a lot. More meaningful is how long they’ve been there. If under a year, it’s more likely that they’re scammers and had previously shut down under a different name. Over two years is good. Jack emailed about two hundred of them and asked for price lists. Those with an 86 country code are manufacturers in China or someone associated with them. Those with an 852 Hong Kong country code are probably resellers (also fine) who likely all work in the same building(s). Big companies may have four or five salespeople; smaller ones have one or two. In any case, a salesperson responds to emails and that’s who you deal with.

Sometimes, they provide COAs (Certificates of Analysis), “an official, verified document issued by an accredited laboratory that details the exact chemical composition, potency, and safety of a product.” They may or may not be legit, but it’s good to have them. Members of the Telegram group have discussed sending our own vials to labs for testing, but that hasn’t happened yet; it can be expensive.

Another caution, from Google AI: “Vendors often pay for a test of one high-quality sample and use that certificate to sell a completely different or lesser-quality batch to consumers. A test proves the quality of the specific sample submitted, not the entire inventory.” The more recent the tests, the better.

During the three months I’ve been a member of the Telegram group, various members have placed orders from a few of the vendors who looked promising and have reported on their experiences, such as how long it took to receive their orders after paying, whether they received them, and if so, whether the products seemed to be working.

I waited for a consensus to form around which supplier has the best combination of reliability and good prices. Finally, I placed my order with the company Jack liked best in the beginning and still liked at the time. I received it thirteen days after paying for it, which is pretty good, and started taking them on April 15, 2026.

One’s experience in part depends on the integrity and competence of the salesperson. Several have been unresponsive, and that eliminated them from further consideration by our group. One doesn’t like orders under \$1000 USD, so the group initiator dealt with collecting smaller orders and answering questions. The person I ordered from seemed good until a couple of Australians had their orders seized by customs, which has become more zealous there recently. She had promised to reship such orders but did not; she ghosted one customer and demanded that the other pay half again to reship—there were no refunds. She has now also been dropped from future consideration. The goal of the group is to have three reliable sources, and that is a work in progress. Let me know if you wish to join the group and I’ll ask for permission.

In addition to tirzepatide, I’m taking DSIP, BPC 157 5 mg + TB-500, CJC-1295 with DAC, and retatrutide. DSIP is known to increase the duration of deep sleep. I track my sleep and so far, I haven’t gotten that result, although I may be waking a little less often. Two of the peptides are

said to reduce inflammation and aches. My body aches may be reduced a little although not eliminated. My body is idiosyncratic and what works for other people often doesn't for me, so I don't take that as reflecting the quality of the products, and I will continue taking them.

I had hoped that retatrutide would increase my metabolism. As with tirzepatide, I started small and gradually increased my dose. I also increased my dose of tirzepatide, being careful not to get close to the maximum of either. After a couple months, it finally seems to be working.

I'm also going back to reducing carbs and increasing protein as I had earlier in the program. I had backslid into eating more fruit, my favorite food. It's very healthy in moderation but it's still sugar, albeit in a better form than refined sugar. It's not my preference, but lower carbs works better for me.

To be continued ...