

WHITE PAPER

Transforming Obesity Management

A Comprehensive Approach



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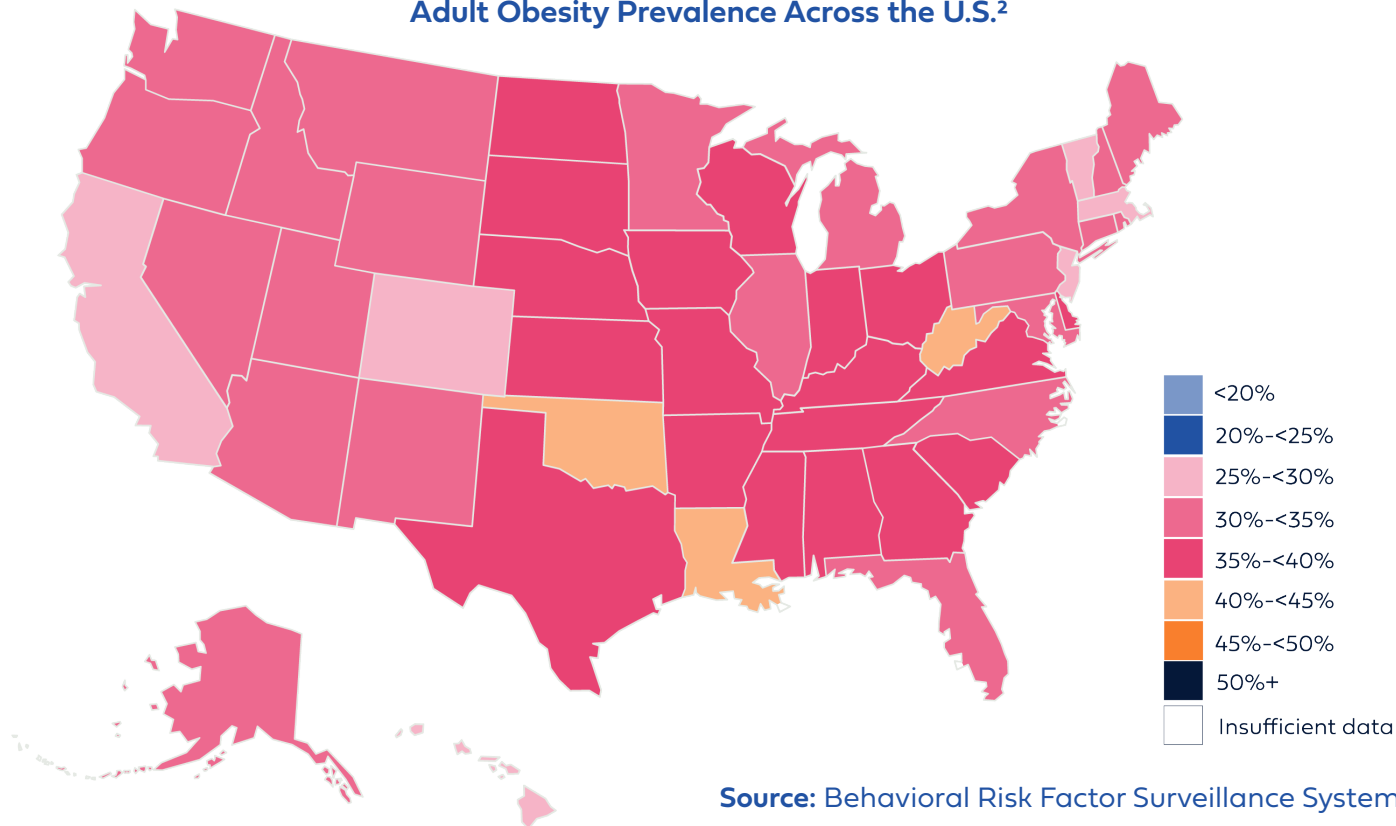
OVERVIEW

There is an urgent imperative to combat obesity in the United States by addressing disparities in food access, enhancing nutritional availability, and empowering health plan members. This white paper underscores the pivotal role that tailored food access, personalized nutrition coaching, and prudent utilization of GLP-1 Receptor Agonists (GLP-1s) play in obesity management. When these are used holistically, substantial cost savings and improvements in overall health results.

The paper also introduces the concept of step therapy as a viable alternative to prolonged GLP-1 use and underscores the importance of healthcare providers' proficiency in nutrition and lifestyle interventions. With a 42% obesity prevalence in the U.S., it's critical for health plans to offer integrated and sustainable interventions to manage this growing health crisis.¹



Adult Obesity Prevalence Across the U.S.²



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

¹NHANES, 2021

²Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2022;

INTRODUCTION

Obesity is a multifaceted health condition impacting 1 in 5 children and more than 1 in 3 adults in the U.S.” (CDC) This condition not only affects individuals’ physical health, but also their mental and behavioral well-being, self-image, and overall quality of life.

Obesity costs the US healthcare system around \$173 billion a year due to costly inpatient and outpatient visits, prescription drugs, and treatment for common comorbid conditions such as Type II Diabetes, Hypertension, Cardiovascular Disease and Mental Health.



Millions of health plan members face a range of formidable challenges when seeking quality healthcare and access to nourishing food for these common and costly conditions. This paper explores a multifaceted approach that involves innovative solutions, such as personalized and consistent food access, nutrition coaching, and the prudent use of GLP-1s to address these challenges.



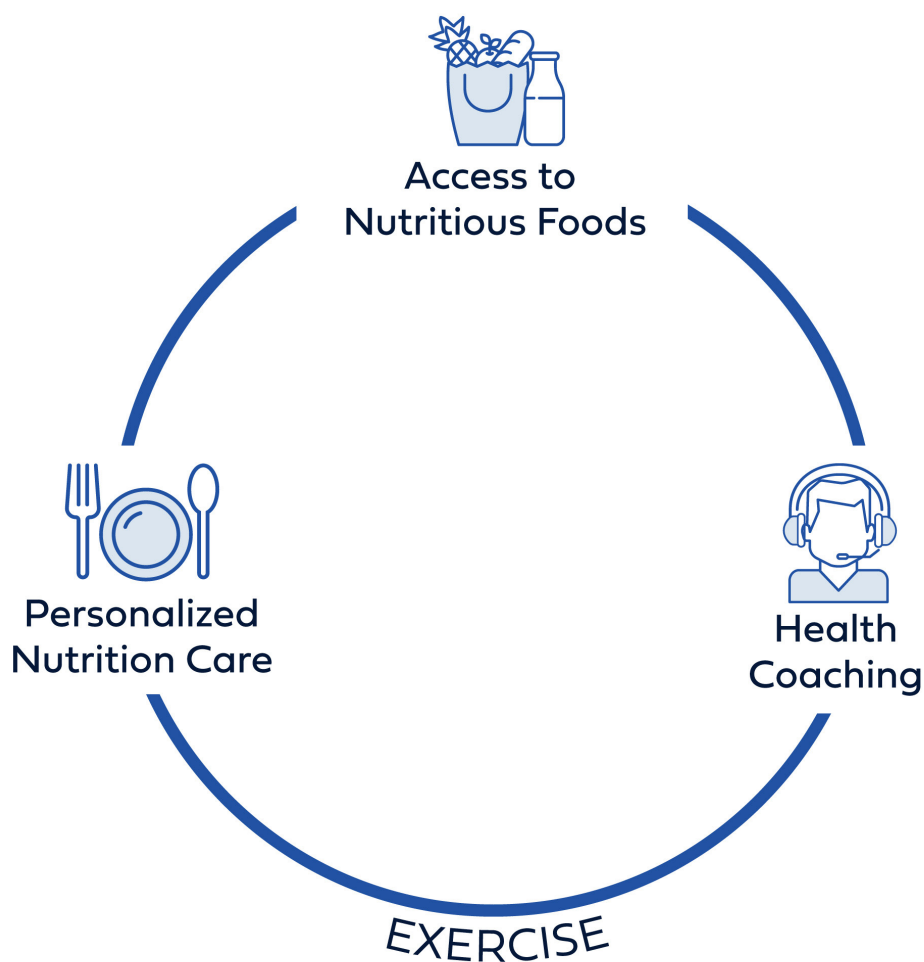
³ Obesity is Common, Serious, and Costly. Why it Matters. Accessed February 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/about-obesity/why-it-matters.html#:~:text=Obesity%20costs%20the%20US%20healthcare%20system%20nearly%20%24%20billion%20a%20year>

⁴ Cawley J, Biener A, Meyerhoefer C, Ding Y, Zvenyach T, Smolarz BG, Ramasamy A. Direct medical costs of obesity in the United States and the most populous states. *J Manag Care Spec Pharm*. 2021 Mar;27(3):354-366. doi: 10.18553/jmcp.2021.20410. Epub 2021 Jan 20. PMID: 33470881; PMCID: PMC10394178.

⁵ Ferhatbegović L, Mršić D, Macić-Džanković A. The benefits of GLP1 receptors in cardiovascular diseases. *Front Clin Diabetes Healthc*. 2023 Dec 8;4:1293926. doi: 10.3389/fcdhc.2023.1293926. PMID: 38143794; PMCID: PMC10739421.

A Holistic Approach to Managing Obesity

A comprehensive Medicaid strategy for obesity management must entail addressing food disparities, enhancing nutritional accessibility, offering personalized nutrition coaching, and employing effective medications like GLP-1s. This all-encompassing approach empowers members to lead healthier lives while simultaneously mitigating health disparities and alleviating the economic burden of healthcare expenditures.



Prudent GLP-1 use

Per Doctor's prescription
in combination with or as
part of step therapy with
FIM program

Tailored food and nutrition care, coupled with access to wholesome and nutrient-rich foods and health coaching for behavior modification, play a pivotal role in promoting and sustaining good health

● Unique Nutritional Needs

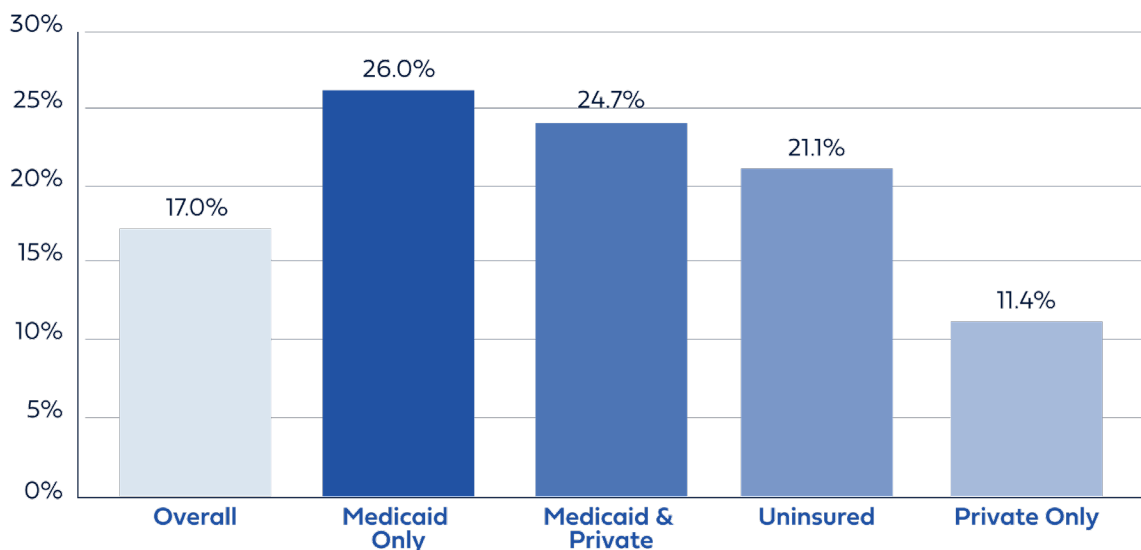
Individual nutritional requirements vary, rendering a one-size-fits-all dietary approach ineffective. Tailored food and nutrition care considers factors such as age, gender, activity level, medical history, and specific dietary preferences or restrictions, creating a personalized plan that suits each individual's distinct needs.

● Chronic Disease Prevention

Proper nutrition can thwart a range of chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer.⁶ Tailoring nutrition and offering access to nutrient-dense foods can address specific risk factors, reducing the likelihood of developing these conditions. Preventing and managing chronic diseases through this approach can lead to substantial cost savings in healthcare, as it often necessitates fewer doctor's visits, hospitalizations, and medications.



Obesity Prevalence Among Children By Coverage Type (Ages 10-17) ⁷



⁶ Gropper SS. The Role of Nutrition in Chronic Disease. *Nutrients*. 2023 Jan 28;15(3):664. doi: 10.3390/nu15030664. PMID: 36771368; PMCID: PMC9921002.

⁷ Williams, Elizabeth; Burns, Alice; Rudowitz, Robin. KFF. August 17, 2023. "Obesity Rates Among Children: A Closer Look at Implications for Children Covered by Medicaid"

● Weight Management

Personalized nutrition plans assist individuals in achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. Health coaching provides guidance on portion control, mindful eating, and strategies for sustainable weight loss or maintenance including exercise, hydration, and stress management. Health coaching is instrumental in helping individuals make enduring behavior changes by offering guidance, support, and motivation.⁸

● Nutrient-Dense Foods

Access to nutrient-rich foods ensures that individuals receive essential vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients crucial for overall health. These foods can enhance energy levels, support cognitive function, and improve overall well-being.

● Improved Quality of Life

When individuals have access to healthy and nutrient-dense foods, coupled with personalized nutrition care and coaching, they are more likely to experience an enhanced overall quality of life, including improved physical and mental health, increased energy levels, and a reduced risk of chronic diseases.⁹

● Sustainable Change

A holistic approach focuses on fostering sustainable behavior changes rather than quick fixes, therefore enhancing the likelihood of long-term success in achieving health and wellness goals.



⁸ Kennel J. Health and Wellness Coaching Improves Weight and Nutrition Behaviors. *Am J Lifestyle Med*. 2018 Aug 9;12(6):448-450. doi: 10.1177/1559827618792846. PMID: 30783395; PMCID: PMC6367877.

⁹ Bleich SN, Dupuis R, Seligman HK. Food Is Medicine Movement—Key Actions Inside and Outside the Government. *JAMA Health Forum*. 2023;4(8):e233149. doi:10.1001/jamahealthforum.2023.3149

GLP-1 RAs: A Paradigm Shift in Tackling Obesity

The weight loss industry was not historically a major aspect of the healthcare system until two major innovations occurred: bariatric surgery and GLP-1 drugs.¹⁰

Weight loss surgery

Weight loss surgeries originated in the 1960s but didn't take off until the 1990s. These surgeries include bariatric, gastric bypass, sleeves and bands, which either limit the amount the food that someone's stomach can contain or bypass/shorten the small intestine to reduce the amount of calories one's system can absorb.¹¹

These interventions, "despite being the only effective durable treatment for obesity, remains underused as approximately 1% of all patients who qualify undergo surgery."¹² And even then, according to Duke Health, "long-term success of bariatric surgery depends on one's ability to make permanent changes in diet, behavior, and exercise. When those changes take place, studies show that people who undergo bariatric surgery experience many benefits". However, adoption remains quite low.

GLP-1 Medications

The emergence of new pharmacological treatments such as the GLP-1 class of drugs is reshaping the obesity management landscape. These medications offer effective solutions for weight control that extend beyond traditional approaches reliant on invasive surgery or solely on willpower and motivation. The development and increasing acceptance of these medications signify a significant shift towards recognizing obesity as a multifaceted health concern necessitating comprehensive care.



¹⁰ Lambert, Lane. "Slim Chance: Drugs Will Reshape the Weight Loss Industry, But Habit Change Might Be Elusive", Harvard Business School Press. 2024 Feb 8.

¹¹ Greenwell, Kathriena. "Thinking about weight-loss surgery? 4 things to consider" Speaking of Health, Mayo Clinic Health System. 2023 Aug 18.

¹² Clapp B, Ponce J, DeMaria E, Ghanem O, Hutter M, Kothari S, LaMasters T, Kurian M, English W. American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery 2020 estimate of metabolic and bariatric procedures performed in the United States. Surg Obes Relat Dis. 2022 Sep;18(9):1134-1140. doi: 10.1016/j.soard.2022.06.284. Epub 2022 Jun 26. PMID: 35970741.

About GLP-1

Our bodies naturally make the GLP-1 hormone which is involved in secreting insulin which regulates blood sugar, suppressing glucagon which may reduce hunger, and increasing satiation which delays emptying the stomach. GLP-1 agonist drugs, bind to our GLP-1 receptors and drive these same outcomes. These medications were originally developed for diabetes management until data also showed their significant impact on weight management. With nearly seven GLP-1 drugs approved for diabetes and two approved for weight loss, financial institutions, such as JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs, predict the GLP-1 market will reach \$75-\$100 billion annually within the next ten years.¹³

GLP-1 drugs, while shown very effective, also have limitations ¹⁴

- **Cost** Average per patient pricing hovers around \$900 - \$1,300 a month (not taking reimbursement into consideration which isn't always available).
- **Frequent injections** These currently have to be injected anywhere from once a week to twice a day depending on the product.
- **Use it or lose it** When the medications are stopped, the weight loss benefits go away.
- **Impact** Reported weight loss varies by which drug is used and depending on the rigor of data published thereof. In general, one can expect weight loss around 10%-15% of current body weight.¹⁵
- **Side effects** Some can experience anything from nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches and increased heart rate to more severe pancreatitis, anaphylaxis, thyroid cancer and kidney injury (Cleveland Clinic).

Incorporating the use of GLP-1s for weight loss into the context of food and nutrition care adds an important dimension to managing health. GLP-1 medications, originally used for the treatment of type 2 diabetes, have been recognized for their efficacy in promoting weight loss. This is due to their ability to increase insulin secretion in response to glucose, decrease glucagon secretion, slow gastric emptying, and enhance satiety, which together can lead to reduced food intake and weight loss. Many drugs are now approved solely for obesity use. Food and nutrition care can support individuals using GLP-1 medications for weight loss, in the following ways:

¹³ J.P.Morgan, "The Increase in Appetite for Obesity Drugs". November 29, 2023

¹⁴ Rachael Ajmera, MS, RD and Katey Davidson, MScFN, RD, CPT. "GLP-1 Medications for Weight Loss and Type 2 Diabetes" Health Line Media. Medically reviewed by Philip Ngo, PharmD. Updated August 15, 2023.

¹⁵ Galzerano, Sarah. "What to Know About How Weight Loss Medications Work". Jefferson Health May, 08, 2023. Contributor and reviewer Dr. Nathan Lent.

● Optimizes Medication Effectiveness for Weight Loss

Nutrition care can significantly enhance the weight loss effects of GLP-1 medications. A diet focused on portion control, low-calorie, nutrient-dense foods can help reduce overall calorie intake, working in tandem with the medication to promote weight loss.

● Facilitates Sustainable Weight Management

While GLP-1 medications can significantly contribute to initial weight loss, integrating nutrition care ensures that weight loss is sustainable in the long term. Education on healthy eating habits, calorie balance, and the importance of a balanced diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats can help individuals maintain their weight loss achievements.

● Addresses Nutritional Deficiencies

A focus on weight loss, especially if it leads to restrictive eating patterns, can result in nutritional deficiencies. A comprehensive nutrition care plan can help ensure that individuals are receiving adequate vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients essential for overall health, supporting the body's needs while on GLP-1 medication.

● Alleviates Gastrointestinal Side Effects

GLP-1 medications can cause gastrointestinal side effects such as nausea, which can affect an individual's ability to maintain a healthy diet. Tailoring nutrition interventions, such as recommending small, frequent meals and avoiding foods that exacerbate nausea, can help manage these side effects and ensure that nutrition does not hinder the weight loss process but in fact complements it.

● Can Reduce Muscle Loss

New research is showing that a portion of weight lost on some GLP-1s can come from muscle loss.¹⁶ Working with a nutrition coach to evaluate protein intake as well as resistance training programs can go a long way to retaining and promoting lean muscle.

¹⁶ John P.H. Wilding, D.M., Rachel L. Batterham, M.B., B.S., Ph.D., Salvatore Calanna, Ph.D., Melanie Davies, M.D., Luc F. Van Gaal, M.D., Ph.D., Ildiko Lingvay, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.C.S., Barbara M. McGowan, M.D., Ph.D., Julio Rosenstock, M.D., Marie T.D. Tran, M.D., Ph.D., Once-Weekly Semaglutide in Adults with Overweight or Obesity, March 18, 2021 N Engl J Med 2021; 384:989-1002
Thomas A. Wadden, Ph.D., Sean Wharton, M.D., Pharm.D., Koutaro Yokote, M.D., Ph.D., et al., for the STEP 1 Study Group* March 18, 2021 N Engl J Med 2021; 384:989-1002

● Supports Comprehensive Health Benefits

Beyond weight loss, individuals on GLP-1 medications often have other health considerations, such as the risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. A well-designed nutrition plan can address these risks by promoting foods that support heart health, regulate blood sugar levels, and reduce inflammation.

Integrating GLP-1 medications for weight loss with personalized food and nutrition care creates a holistic approach to health management.¹⁷ It not only supports the effectiveness of the medication in achieving weight loss goals but also addresses the broader health needs of the individual. Collaboration with health coaches and dietitians, is essential to create a nutrition plan that complements the use of GLP-1 medications, ensures the management of side effects, and promotes long-term health and wellness.

Cultivating Compassionate Care

Individuals with obesity deserve compassionate and empathetic care, just as those with any other health condition. Advancements in pharmaceutical treatments for obesity are contributing to destigmatizing the condition and encouraging healthcare providers to adopt a more understanding approach. These medications not only aid in weight management but also assist patients in cultivating healthier relationships with food and their bodies. A health coach used as a key element in holistic treatment can offer the compassionate care and support so many need.



¹⁷ Adeola OL, Agudosi GM, Akueme NT, Okobi OE, Akinyemi FB, Ononiwu UO, Akunne HS, Akinboro MK, Ogbeifun OE, Okeaya-Inneh M. The Effectiveness of Nutritional Strategies in the Treatment and Management of Obesity: A Systematic Review. Cureus. 2023 Sep 19;15(9):e45518. doi: 10.7759/cureus.45518. PMID: 37868473; PMCID: PMC10585414.

Step Therapy as a Viable Alternative

Step therapy represents a cost-effective approach that allows patients to embark on a journey towards improved health. By embracing a “food as medicine” philosophy and effectively managing co-occurring cardio-metabolic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension, patients can receive support as they progress towards their health objectives. While step therapy may not exclude the use of GLP-1 drugs, it offers an alternative approach centered on sustained progress and lifestyle enhancements.

Structured step therapy option can include:

- Utilization of a food access and nutrition coaching program as a pre-requisite to starting GLP-1 medications ensuring behavior change is co-occurring with the drug’s positive intervention period.
- Weaning patient off GLP-1 medications once target goal is reached while maintaining nutrition access and coaching post medication use.
- GLP-1 booster treatments as needed



CONCLUSION

Personalized food access, nutrition coaching, and the judicious application of medications like GLP-1s present transformative solutions for health plan members grappling with obesity. By integrating these innovative approaches with empathy and addressing food inequities, substantial strides can be made towards a healthier and more equitable future for the high number of people who struggle with obesity.



Obesity is a multifaceted challenge, and those affected by it deserve compassionate and effective care that takes into account their unique needs and goals. A wholesome diet and a balanced lifestyle contribute to emotional and psychological well-being. Individuals who prioritize healthy eating and maintain a suitable weight often experience reduced stress, enhanced mood, and elevated self-esteem.

Tailored food and nutrition care, in conjunction with access to wholesome foods and behavior change with the support of coaching, constitute pivotal components of a comprehensive approach to health and well-being. These strategies empower individuals to seize control of their health, prevent diseases, and enrich their overall quality of life. Moreover, they have the potential to benefit not just individuals but also communities and healthcare systems by curbing healthcare costs and enhancing public health outcomes.

Personalized Nutrition Care



Access to Nutritious Foods



Health Coaching



GLP-1 Utilization





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