

## Virtual Primary Care Prescribing Weight Loss Medications Operating Procedure

**Problem:** With increased popularity and usage of weight-loss medications, especially injectables, patients are requesting these medications at a higher rate. The barriers to patients receiving these medications include medical indications and contraindications, high out of pocket costs due to non-coverage by insurance companies and supply shortages. When a prior authorization is submitted to an insurance company, they are looking for specific details and if not properly documented, a denial will be issued to the patient.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the operating procedure is to provide a framework for physicians, nurses and medical assistants that are involved in the prescribing of weight loss medications so that appropriate steps are followed in the prescribing of the medications.

**Scope:** This procedure applies to MAs, RNs, Physicians, and other clinical staff that care for patients in VPC.

### Procedure:

When a physician deems it medically appropriate to prescribe weight loss medications the following steps should be followed to improve the likelihood of getting the medication approved and the patient having better success on their weight-loss journey.

1. Gather as much information about the patient as possible before prescribing medications.
2. During the initial visit to discuss weight loss medications, document the following information (see template in Elation):
  1. Current diet and exercise plan
  2. Previous weight-loss medications that have been tried and failed
  3. Contraindications to alternative medication or therapy
  4. Weight changes in the last 12 months
  5. History of diabetes or cardiovascular comorbidity
  6. Previous evaluation for bariatric surgery
  7. Personal or family history of thyroid disease or cancer

8. Current weight and BMI
3. During the initial visit, labs must be ordered or obtain copies of previous labs. The most recent labs should be done within 3 months of the visit date. Labs must include HgbA1c and TSH at minimum.
4. The Care Summary must include instructions on specific diet and exercise recommendations.
5. A request for previous records must be requested that supports any information that was provided by the patient regarding previous usage of weight-loss medications so that it can be sent in with the prior authorization.
6. Medications should not be offered during the visit and patient should be scheduled a follow-up to discuss lab results, previous records and adherence to recommendations made at the initial visit.
7. During the follow-up visit to discuss weight loss medications, document the following information:
  1. Lab results
  2. Review of previous records
  3. BMI
  4. Adherence to recommendations
8. If patient and doctor agree to initiate medications during this visit, the medication must be FDA approved for the clinical indication to avoid insurance denial. Currently, Wegovy is the only FDA approved GLP-1 agonist without a diabetes diagnosis (with limited exceptions).
9. A Prior Authorization will be submitted once all of the appropriate documentation is received after the initial visit. The typical timeframe for this is 7-10 business days.
10. If the insurance company provides an alternative option they cover, this option should be provided to the patient.
11. If it is determined that the patient should be referred out, a consult must be placed so that the referral specialist can find an in-network provider for the patient. Patients should not be referred to other platforms or compounding pharmacies which could create a conflict of interest and increased out-of-pocket costs for patients.
12. If the PA is denied, the patient should continue to meet with the doctor on a scheduled basis to follow up on their weight loss journey.

**Resources:**

- [VPC Guidelines](#)
- [Elation Obesity Template link](#)