

Popular weight loss & diabetic drugs Ozempic and Wegovy may lead to sudden vision loss: Study

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New Delhi: Recent research published in JAMA Ophthalmology has identified a concerning link between semaglutide-containing drugs, Ozempic and Wegovy, and a rare eye disorder called non-arteritic anterior ischemic optic

neuropathy (NAION). This condition, which impairs blood flow to the optic nerve, can lead to sudden vision loss.

NAION is a rare but serious condition, affecting 2 to 10 individuals per 100,000 people. It is the second leading cause of optic nerve-related blindness, and currently, no effective treatment exists.

Higher risk for semaglutide users

The study revealed that individuals using semaglutide for diabetes management had a fourfold increase in the likelihood of developing NAION compared to those on other medications. For those using semaglutide for weight loss, the risk was even higher, with a sevenfold increase.

Among 710 patients with type 2 diabetes, 8.9 per cent of semaglutide users developed NAION, compared to 1.8% among those using other treatments. Similarly, 6.7 per cent of patients using semaglutide for weight loss experienced NAION, compared to 0.8 per cent of patients on alternative medicines.

Expert advice calls for caution

Dr Rizzo, one of the study's authors, emphasized the importance of measured decision-making. "To be perfectly clear, I would not take my findings and use them to recommend that patients stop taking their medications," he stated. "Our finding was really the first possible significant negative finding with these drugs. It may just merit extra caution in the consideration between doctors and patients about who may use this medicine."

Implications for patients and healthcare providers

The findings highlight the need for ongoing dialogue between patients and healthcare providers when considering the use of semaglutide-based medications. While these drugs are widely used for diabetes and weight loss, the potential risk of severe vision impairment underscores the importance of individualized treatment plans and monitoring.

Further research is required to understand the mechanisms behind this association and to develop strategies for mitigating the risks. For now, patients are advised to consult their doctors and weigh the benefits and risks carefully.

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