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UPDATED FOR 2026
Built for what's next

# How to turn GLP-1s into lasting outcomes

## A practical guide to improving metabolic outcomes while controlling total cost of care

# The new GLP-1 reality

GLP-1s have quickly become a standard part of obesity and metabolic health care.

About **1 in 8 adults use a GLP-1 for weight loss, diabetes or another condition, often with long-term or life-long use in mind.**[1] Oral GLP-1s, cash pay, and direct-to-consumer models are improving access and lowering costs for employers. However, even with lower costs, rising demand is likely to keep GLP-1s a top pharmacy cost driver.

As investment increases, so does the pressure on benefits leaders to deliver measurable value without sacrificing member experience. Beyond coverage, the urgent question leaders are now asking is **how to turn GLP-1 investments into outcomes that last—and whether long-term use is the only path forward.**

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# Renting results: the risk of GLP-1s without a long-term strategy

GLP-1s can drive meaningful improvements in weight and metabolic health, but they aren't designed to deliver lasting results on their own. Without a long-term plan, GLP-1s are an expensive solution for renting health.

Sustained outcomes depend on what happens alongside the prescription. Without provider oversight and support to make appropriate nutrition changes (as recommended alongside GLP-1s in FDA guidelines), many will struggle to maintain results. This has proven true with low long-term adherence and weight regain after discontinuation.

Together, these patterns highlight a fundamental gap in GLP-1 strategies: they are often deployed without a long-term plan for how outcomes will be maintained over time.

Only
**8%**
**remain on GLP-1s for weight loss at 3 years[2]**

**Most regain all weight within**
**2 years**
**of stopping a GLP-1[3]**

**What's next?**
Benefits leaders looking to optimize investments today must look beyond access or affordability and implement strategies that improve cost effectiveness of these medications when taken.

# Rethinking weight loss journeys and the role of GLP-1s

An estimated 48 million Americans expect to start a GLP-1 for weight loss in 2026,[4] with no end in sight for increased demand. And even if GLP-1s became free today, a study by Blue Cross Blue Shield Association showed that they would still result in additional cost to the health system.[5] This points to a broader challenge: access and affordability alone does not guarantee better outcomes—or lower total cost of care.

**Whether or not a member chooses to take a GLP-1, the key to helping more members achieve long-term weight loss and blood sugar control is nutrition change.**

Nutrition plays a central role in restoring metabolic health. Unlike traditional diet or exercise programs, Virta focuses not on *how much* a member eats but on *what* they eat. This naturally quiets food noise and eliminates hunger cravings (what many rely on the medication to do).[6] For many, this can serve as a drug-free alternative. For others, it enhances the impact of a GLP-1 while preserving lean muscle mass[7] and setting members up for success when the medication is eventually discontinued.

# Evolving utilization management strategies for impact

Traditional utilization management strategies like prior authorization, step therapy, or coverage restrictions, can help manage access and short-term costs.

But utilization management strategies don't always account for what happens during and after GLP-1s are taken. To ensure lasting outcomes and cost-effectiveness, benefits leaders must evaluate how GLP-1 care is delivered over time.

## Key questions to ask GLP-1 prescribing partners:

1. **What does provider oversight look like?**
2. **How are nutrition and lifestyle changes supported?**
3. **What is the plan for after members stop taking a GLP-1 to ensure they maintain outcomes?**
4. **What long-term outcomes have been demonstrated?**

This approach supports GLP-1 strategies designed for the full member journey, not just the point of access.

# How to Avoid Wasted Spend and Deliver Outcomes

# A blueprint for modernizing GLP-1 approaches

**With millions on the line, modern GLP-1 strategies must drive real clinical and financial outcomes, and remain flexible for what's to come.**

Use the blueprint on the following pages to modernize your GLP-1 strategy. These 3 steps will ensure you prevent wasted pharmacy spend and "rollercoaster" outcomes as members transition on and off GLP-1s.

1. **Offer all members proven, drug-free GLP-1 alternatives, including a quality lifestyle program first**
2. **Maximize GLP-1 effects with personalized nutrition and provider oversight**
3. **Set members up for life-long success after stopping GLP-1s**

# 1 Offer all members proven, drug-free GLP-1 alternatives, including a quality lifestyle program first

**Reduce GLP-1 costs by introducing drug-free, nutrition-first alternatives to all members.**

Educate anyone interested in taking a GLP-1 on what it is like to take the medication, what side effects they may experience, what is required to sustain outcomes, and what drug-free alternatives exist.

With Virta as the sole GLP-1 prescriber, all members seeking a GLP-1 for weight loss are navigated to Virta for intake. Everyone is offered a nutrition-first path first. Virta's nutrition-first approach results in drug-like impact without the costs or side effects. After learning about their options, members and their providers build a personalized care plan, which may or may not involve taking a GLP-1.

**More than 2 in 3 members**

not utilizing a GLP-1 at the time of enrollment with Virta choose a nutrition-therapy pathway.[8]

## The member experience with Virta's Trusted Prescriber Network

**Member seeks a GLP-1 from a non-Virta provider**

**Member notified that Rx is only available through Virta**

**Members directed to Virta to get started with a personalized care plan that may or may not include medication**

**Some navigated to drug-free, nutrition-first path**

**Some prescribed a GLP-1 alongside support for lifestyle and nutrition change**

# 2 Maximize GLP-1 effects with personalized nutrition and provider oversight

Provider oversight supports side effect mitigation, dosing, and titration to maximize weight loss. These clinicians can also monitor adherence requirements to ensure pharmacy budgets are not wasted.

Virta's continuous care model supports members taking GLP-1s by safely titrating medication to the most effective dose. Providers monitor for adherence and adequacy of clinical response. Members also receive intensive health coaching and personalized nutrition recommendations to help them make sustainable nutrition and lifestyle changes. This is an important element because restoring the metabolism doesn't rely on how much members eat, it relies on what they eat.

## Virta helps members get the most from GLP-1s taken

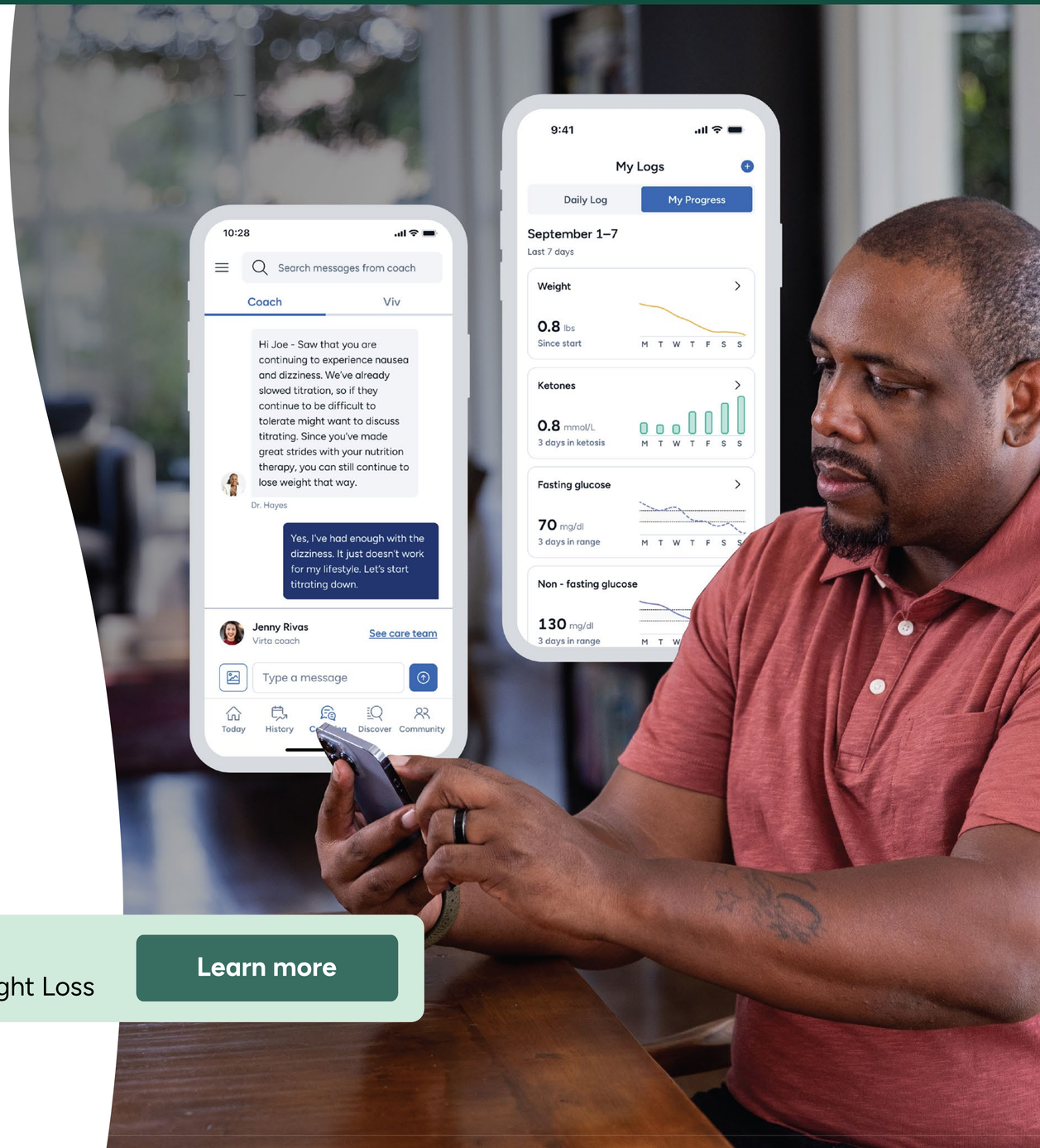
1. **Encourages effective lifestyle changes, like nutrition choices**
2. **Safely titrates doses and mitigates side effects**
3. **Monitors and enforces adherence to maintain prescription access**

# 3 Set members up for life-long success after stopping GLP-1s

It is unlikely a member will take a GLP-1 for life. And data show that most regain all of the weight lost within 2 years of stopping the medication.[3] You can help members avoid weight regain by designing strategies with a built-in off-ramp from day 1.

**Virta's prescribers have more than a decade of experience helping members lose weight and safely offramp medications, including GLP-1s.** Virta empowers members to fix the foundation of metabolic health with proven nutrition-based lifestyle changes that move members from GLP-1 dependency to a future where they can maintain weight loss if and when they no longer want or tolerate a GLP-1.

Virta is the only reversal solution with published results on sustained weight loss a year after GLP-1 deprescription using lifestyle intervention.




Virta Health Announces First-of-its-Kind Peer-Reviewed Study Proving Its Approach Is an Effective Off-Ramp From GLP-1s for Sustained Weight Loss

Learn more

# The financial impact: driving ROI from GLP-1 spend

Amy Zhang
Staff Actuary, Virta

As GLP-1 use expands, many organizations remain focused on controlling costs. But others are starting to focus on value, asking what outcomes are achieved for every dollar spent.

In the absence of an evidence-based lifestyle program, GLP-1s for weight loss are unlikely to deliver meaningful ROI. New studies show that even if GLP-1s cost nothing, they would add to total cost of care.[5] Despite this, reasons remain for covering GLP-1s: supporting population health, meeting consumer demand, and delivering quality care.

Making these investments more cost effective requires engaging a trusted partner to guide members before, during, and after GLP-1 use. This ensures access is paired with the provider, nutrition, and behavior change support needed to drive lasting outcomes.

Even as GLP-1 prices begin to moderate, rising demand and broader utilization mean they will remain a substantial and growing cost driver for plans.

Pairing coverage with a proven, nutrition-first approach like Virta helps ensure those dollars translate into durable outcomes and a clear ROI.

Organizations working with Virta to implement GLP-1 strategies gain visibility into key metrics, including how many members enrolled in a nutrition-first approach instead of or alongside a GLP-1, and how weight loss outcomes compare between populations taking and not taking a GLP-1. Virta modeled the financial impact of this approach and conservatively projects a 2:1 ROI.[9]

# Metrics to monitor your GLP-1 spend

Part of optimizing your GLP-1 investments for weight loss and diabetes includes measuring whether your partner is positively impacting your GLP-1 strategy. Here are ways to evaluate impact based on your organization's top priorities.

| If your priority is... | Make sure your partner can help you report on these metrics | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cost containment | Percentage of GLP-1 seekers navigated to a drug-free alternative | Total number of GLP-1 deprescriptions and number of unfilled GLP-1 prescriptions | Prescription volume |
| Ensuring your GLP-1 spend is productive | 18-month and 24-month medication adherence | Longitudinal biomarker and lab tracking | Sustained weight loss, with or without taking a GLP-1 |
| Member or employee experience | Satisfaction rates | Talent retention | Union negotiations |

# Turn GLP-1 investments into lasting outcomes

GLP-1s have become a standard part of metabolic care. Without the right strategy, benefits leaders risk ongoing costs without desired results.

Virta makes GLP-1 use responsible and effective with an approach that goes beyond access and cost control to make every dollar spent on GLP-1s more efficient.

Through a combination of personalized nutrition, technology, and provider-led care, Virta serves as:

1. **A highly effective GLP-1 alternative** for members who don't want medication
2. **A clinical partner** to optimize GLP-1 use when prescribed
3. **A sustainable off-ramp** to help members maintain result over time

**13%**
**weight loss**
**without Rx at 1 year**[10]

**50%**
**decrease**
**in GLP-1 use for weight loss among existing users**[11]

**Contact Virta to design a GLP-1 strategy that delivers lasting value**

virtahealth.com

partner@virtahealth.com

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