


## BUSINESS

# Study links injectable weight loss drugs to rare vision loss

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on drugs such as Ozempic may be at risk of a rare side effect, according to a new study by Robert Brodsky and Lee Meyer.

**By Robert Brodsky and Lee Meyer**

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A small percentage of patients on injectable weight loss drugs such as Ozempic and Wegovy may be at risk of a rare side effect that causes permanent vision loss, according to a new study.

[The report](#), published Thursday in the medical journal JAMA Ophthalmology, found that five out of 25,330 patients studied, or less than 0.02%, of those who took Ozempic and Wegovy, also known as GLP-1 drugs, developed non-arteritic anterior ischemic optic neuropathy, or NAION, a sudden loss of vision in one eye. The side effect is rare, according to both [the report](#) and a Long Island doctor, but is also the subject of multiple lawsuits, including two filed by Long Island patients who allege they developed NAION after using semaglutide.

The study, however, also noted that semaglutide was not associated with an increased risk of eye disorders or diabetic retinopathy.

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GLP-1 drugs were originally used for diabetes, but are now a [popular method of weight loss](#), even as the drugs face concerns over affordability, insurance coverage and potential side effects, as Newsday has previously reported.

## WHAT NEWSDAY FOUND

- **New research has linked GLP-1** injectable drugs to a rare occurrence of sudden vision loss.
- **The study, however,** also noted that semaglutide was not associated with an increased risk of eye disorders or diabetic retinopathy.
- **A Long Island-based law firm** has filed lawsuits on behalf of individuals, including Long Islanders, who claim they lost their vision due to the drugs.

Dr. Silvana Obici, medical director of the Stony Brook Diabetes Center, said, "The risk of developing NAION so far is reported to be low, possibly well below 0.1 % over many years of follow-up."

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Obici, who is also the chief of the Division of Endocrinology at Stony Brook Medicine, noted that NAION is more common in people who are older, have diabetes or cardiovascular and cerebrovascular disease. Metabolic syndrome, commonly associated with obesity, is an important risk factor for NAION, Obici said.

However, Obici said the benefits of GLP-1s outweigh "the very low risk of NAION that an individualized approach is most effective."

In an emailed statement to Newsday, pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk, which manufactures drugs with semaglutide, the ingredient in GLP-1s linked to weight loss, said that "NAION is a very rare eye disease, and it is not an adverse drug reaction for

the marketed formulations of semaglutide (Ozempic, Rybelsus and Wegovy) as per the approved labels in the U.S."

The company said it "has conducted an analysis across randomized controlled clinical trials with GLP-1 receptor agonists, including a blinded ophthalmologist evaluation to confirm NAION diagnoses. Our current assessment is that these data do not suggest a causal relationship between GLP-1 RA use and NAION events."

## Ongoing lawsuits

Jason Goldstein, a Port Washington-based senior litigation counsel for Parker Waichman LLP, has filed six lawsuits in Middlesex County Superior Court in New Jersey on behalf of individuals, including two Long Island residents, who allege they developed NAION after taking drugs containing semaglutide.

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Anthony Barzyz, 75, of Malverne, in a lawsuit filed Monday, states he began taking Ozempic in the fall of 2023 and several months later lost all vision in his right eye.



Barzyz thought he had a stroke and went through a battery of brain scans before being diagnosed with NAION, which he thinks was caused by the weight loss drug, he told Newsday in an interview.

“They don’t warn you about the blindness,” said Barzyz. “If they had warned me that I could go blind I would have never taken it.”

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Goldstein also represents more than 50 other clients with similar irreversible vision loss — including about half a dozen from Long Island — whose cases he is still reviewing.

“And they all suffered the same type of eye injury as a result of taking this drug,” Goldstein said Monday.

Earlier this month, Parker Waichman filed an application in state court in New Jersey, home to Novo Nordisk, seeking to consolidate their cases, along with those of four other law firms, before a single judge. The application is still under consideration.

Additional lawsuits linking the weight loss drugs to vision loss are also proceeding in federal court.

Many of Goldstein's clients contend they were prescribed the popular weight loss drug for treatment of Type 2 diabetes.

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But months later, records show, the patients allege they developed severely blurred vision and were eventually diagnosed with NAION, often preventing them from continuing to work.

Last month, a risk assessment committee in Europe — the equivalent of the U.S. federal government's FDA — completed its review of several large studies and concluded that NAION is a "very rare side effect" of semaglutide that could affect roughly 1 in every 10,000 people taking the drug.

The committee is recommending that Novo Nordisk update the product label for drugs containing semaglutide to include NAION as a side effect with a frequency of "very rare."

In recent weeks, Novo Nordisk has seen its stock price tumble to multiyear lows, following a July 29 announcement that the Danish drugmaker was slashing its sales and profit projections for 2025.

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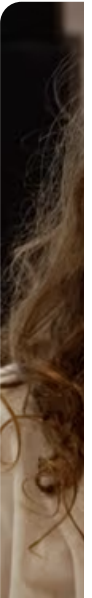
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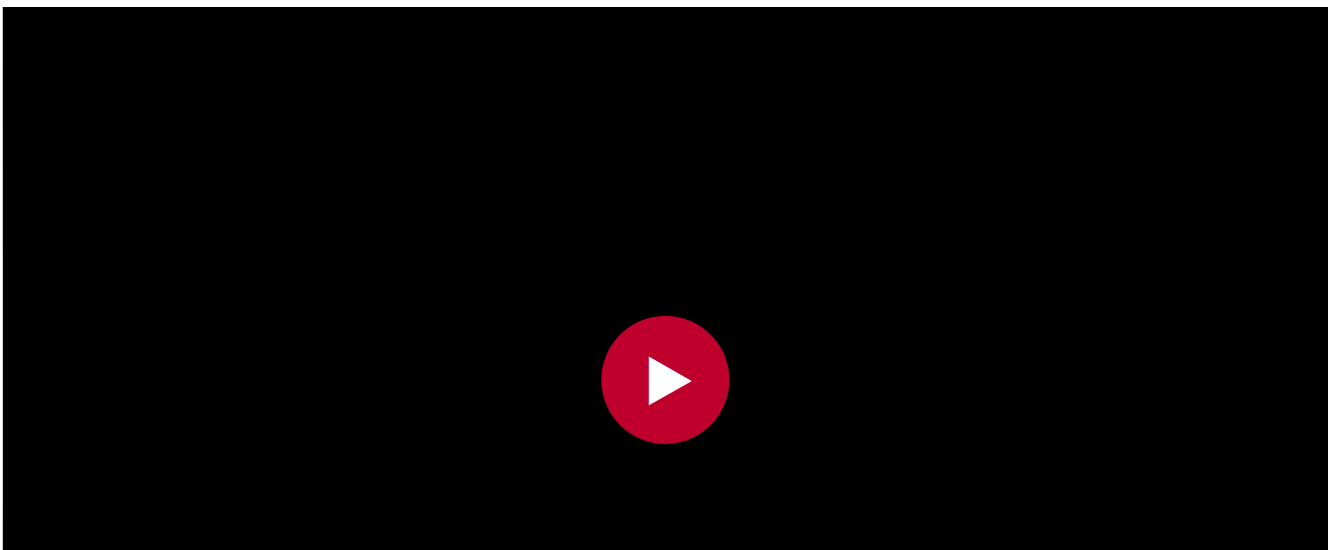
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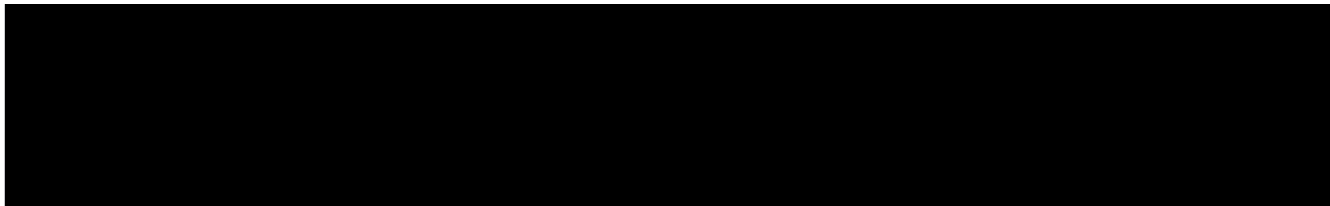


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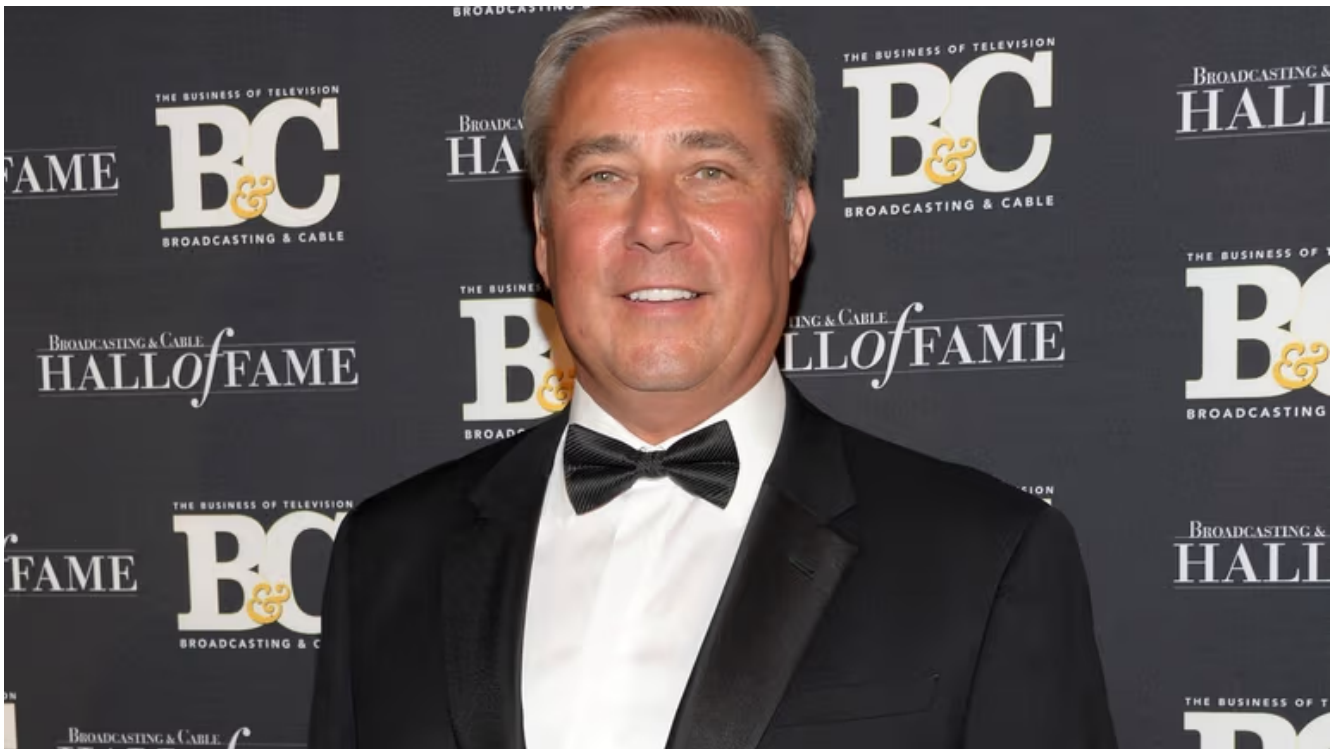
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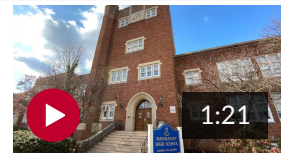


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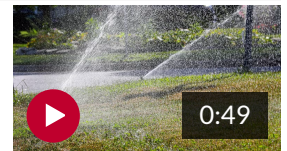


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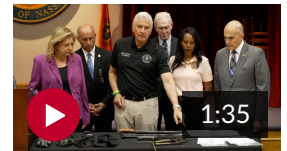
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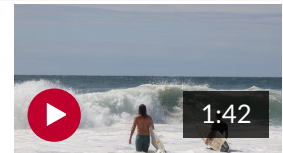
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