Common Side Effects Associated with GLP-1 RAs

Glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1 RAs) significantly lowers HbA1c and weight with a low risk of low blood sugar (hypoglycemia). GLP-1 RAs commonly cause digestive side effects, including diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, decreased appetite, and a feeling of early fullness. Nausea is the most common side effect. The likelihood and duration of side effects will depend on the specific GLP-1 RA you are prescribed; however, side effects can be managed, tend to get better if you continue treatment, and are minimized if you start on a lower dose and increase to the preferred dose.\textsuperscript{1,2}

Strategies to Manage Digestive Side Effects Associated with GLP-1 RAs\textsuperscript{1-3}

- Start on a lower dose of the medication and increase to higher dose over time. Be patient with the results you expect from the medication as it can months to see an improvement in blood sugar control or weight.
- Try to continue taking your medication. Side effects will likely get better with time.
- Eat smaller meals that are low in fat.
- If the symptoms become too severe, call your healthcare provider (HCP). Your dose may need to be adjusted, you may need to stop taking the medication, or your HCP may recommend a different GLP-1 RA.
  - Long-acting GLP-1 RAs are associated with fewer side effects
- If you have an illness that is causing vomiting or diarrhea, call your HCP. You may need to temporarily stop taking the GLP-1 RA. Do not stop taking your medication without consulting your HCP.
- If you experience severe stomach pain or back pain, call your HCP.

Other Side Effects

Some people taking a GLP-1 RA will develop redness or a rash at the injection site (when taking injectable formulations). It is important to follow the right injection technique to reduce redness and rotate where you inject each time an injection is taken. In rare cases, pancreatitis and gallbladder disease have been reported with GLP-1 RAs.\textsuperscript{1-3}

Who should not take GLP-1 RA? This class of medications should not be used in people who have a personal of family history of rare cancers including medullary thyroid cancer and
multiple endocrine neoplasia- 2. People who have had pancreatitis or are at high ongoing risk for pancreatitis may want to avoid the DPP-4 inhibitors and GLP-1RA. Finally, since GLP-1 RA slow gastric emptying people with diagnosed gastroparesis may not want to use the GLP-1 RA.

Questions to Ask Your HCP

- How soon after starting medication might I experience side effects?
- Are there any medications or food that I should avoid?
- How long is it before side effects begin to decrease for most patients?
- If I cannot handle the side effects, are there other treatment options for me?
- When should I call you?

References

