

6 Minute English

Weight loss drugs

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Neil

Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Georgie

And I'm Georgie. Neil, I saw you eating a healthy-looking salad earlier. Is there anything else you do to stay healthy?

Neil

At the moment I am following an exercise routine and I'm eating healthily, but I'm not sure if it's having much effect. How about you?

Georgie

Uh, well, I'm training for a half marathon at the moment, so I'm doing a lot of running, but I still eat a lot of sugar.

Neil

A sweet treat. Diet, exercise, and eating in moderation helps some people stay at a healthy weight. But with around 65% of British adults estimated to be overweight, that doesn't help everyone. But this has changed with the recent invention of weight loss drugs.

Georgie

Yes. Weight loss drugs like Ozempic and Mounjaro have been a hot topic this year. The drugs are modified versions of natural hormones which make us feel full when released into the body. Weight loss drugs are injected into the tummy and replicate this effect, but last much longer. The idea is that you feel full for longer, eat less, and lose weight.

Neil

In this episode, we'll be hearing more about these drugs helping people lose weight, and as usual, we'll be learning some useful new words and phrases. Plus, there's a worksheet and quiz to practise all the vocabulary we'll learn on our website.

Georgie

But first I have a question for you, Neil. The measurement used by doctors to estimate if someone is at a healthy weight is called BMI. But what does BMI stand for? Is it:

- a) British medical index?
- b) Body mass index? or,
- c) Body muscle index?

Neil

Well, I am 99.9% certain that I know the answer, Georgie, so I don't want to spoil it for our listeners, so we'll just find out at the end.

Georgie

OK then. For radio listener Lynne Massey-Davis, weight loss drugs have been life-changing. Using the drug Mounjaro, Lynne lost 20kg in six months, and now feels happier than ever about her weight, something she discussed with Greg Foot, presenter of BBC Radio 4 programme, Sliced Bread.

Greg Foot

What's it like to be on it?

Lynne Massey-Davis

Well, I don't get hungry, so **food noise** stops. And all those scripts about yourself - that you're a bad person for eating. I feel like that judgment has drifted **into the ether**.

Greg Foot

And when you say **food noise**, what do you mean by that?

Lynne Massey-Davis

For me, it was a conflict, like I'd got **a devil and an angel on my shoulders**. The angel said, 'Don't eat that because you shouldn't eat food!' The devil inside me said, 'Oh, but you just want a taste!' It damaged my **self-esteem** for a very, very long time, probably for the best part of maybe 50 years.

Georgie

Weight loss drugs help Lynne reduce **food noise**, a term for intrusive and unwanted thoughts about food. In fact, Lynne says her unwanted **food noise** has gone **into the ether**, meaning it has completely disappeared.

Neil

Before using Mounjaro, Lynne felt conflicted about food. She says there was **an angel on one shoulder and a devil on the other**, an old idiom which describes having a personal dilemma. An imaginary angel, representing Lynne's conscience, told her what she should do, while a devil sat on the other shoulder, whispering temptations in her ear.

Georgie

Over many years, this inner conflict damaged Lynn's **self-esteem**, her belief and confidence in her own abilities.

Neil

Interestingly, weight loss drugs weren't invented to lose weight at all. They were originally designed for diabetes, a disease caused when someone's blood sugar levels get too high. It was only later that doctors noticed the drugs' effect on weight. Professor Giles Yeo researches obesity and is also a consultant for companies developing weight loss drugs. Here he is talking to BBC Radio 4's Sliced Bread.

Prof Giles Yeo

We talk about Ozempic first because that was the first **on the market** for diabetes, and then people begin to notice, as a **side effect**, that people were losing weight. A lot of people with diabetes also have obesity and part of the effects of actually reversing the diabetes is the fact that they lose weight and so doctors began to sort of prescribe them off-label.

Neil

Ozempic was the first drug **on the market**. When something is **on the market**, it's available for sale.

Georgie

Ozempic was designed for diabetes, but doctors noticed that patients lost weight as a **side effect**. A **side effect** is an unexpected secondary effect of a drug or medicine. It's usually an undesirable effect, although not in this case as it helped people lose weight.

Neil

But could weight loss drugs be too good to be true? A public health official in the UK warns that the drugs alone are not the solution and that people should be encouraged to have a healthier lifestyle. Right, Georgie, isn't it time you revealed the answer to your question?

Georgie

Yes. I asked about BMI, which is the measurement used by doctors to estimate if someone is at a healthy weight. But what does BMI stand for? Now Neil, you didn't give me an answer earlier.

Neil

Yes, that's because I was sure the answer is b) body mass index.

Georgie

That's correct, well done. OK, let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with **food noise**, intrusive and unwanted thoughts about food.

Neil

The idiom, **an angel on one shoulder and a devil on the other** describes a personal dilemma where someone must choose whether to follow their conscience or not.

Georgie

Self-esteem means a belief in your own abilities and value.

Neil

If something disappears **into the ether**, it completely goes away. It vanishes into the air.

Georgie

A product which is **on the market** is available for people to buy.

Neil

And finally, a **side effect** is an unexpected, and usually unwanted, secondary effect of a drug or medicine. Once again, our six minutes are up. But if you're interested in programmes about health, we have a health topic page which you can find on our website, bbclearningenglish.com.

Georgie

See you there soon!

Neil

Goodbye!

VOCABULARY

food noise

intrusive, unwanted thoughts about food

into the ether

(idiom) completely disappeared; vanished into the air

an angel on one shoulder and a devil on the other

(idiom) used to describe a personal dilemma or difficult decision based on an imaginary angel, representing conscience, and an imaginary devil, representing temptation

self-esteem

belief and confidence in your own abilities

on the market

available for sale

side effect

secondary effect of a drug or medicine, usually undesirable or unwanted