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Ozempic access in Saudi Arabia: the SFDA Personal Importation Program

How Saudi patients with type 2 diabetes obtain Ozempic (semaglutide injection) through the SFDA named-patient pathway, on-label only.

Last reviewed 2026-05-12 by Reserve Meds clinical and regulatory team.

Quick orientation

Ozempic is the Novo Nordisk brand of semaglutide injection, a once-weekly GLP-1 receptor agonist approved by the US FDA for three on-label indications: glycemic control in adults with type 2 diabetes (December 2017), reduction of major adverse cardiovascular events in adults with type 2 diabetes and established cardiovascular disease (January 2020), and reduction of worsening kidney disease, kidney failure, and cardiovascular death in adults with type 2 diabetes and chronic kidney disease (January 2025). Ozempic is registered with SFDA, but local stocking in the Kingdom has been uneven since the global GLP-1 demand surge, with pharmacies routing scarce supply to established T2D patients and rationing new starts. Reserve Meds coordinates Ozempic strictly on-label for type 2 diabetes, T2D with CVD, and T2D with CKD. The pathway is the SFDA Personal Importation Program (PIP). Wegovy is the FDA-approved obesity brand of semaglutide and is a separate product; patients seeking semaglutide for weight management are out of scope on this page.

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Why Saudi patients reach for Ozempic through NPP

The Kingdom's access gap for Ozempic is not registration. SFDA registered the product several years ago, and Novo Nordisk supplies the Saudi market through its regional commercial channels. The gap is continuity of stocking. Throughout the global semaglutide shortage that ran from early 2022 through February 2025, Saudi retail pharmacies rationed Ozempic by titration strength and prioritised refills for established patients over new starts. Even after the US FDA formally declared the shortage resolved on 21 February 2025, localised stock variability has persisted into 2026, particularly for the 2 mg pen and at peak demand cycles in Riyadh, Jeddah, and the Eastern Province. A patient with a stable HbA1c on a documented Ozempic regimen who loses access for several weeks risks meaningful clinical instability.

The Kingdom also has an unusually visible gray-market dynamic around semaglutide, driven by substantial weight-loss demand that sits outside the Ozempic on-label scope. Counterfeit and diverted pens have surfaced in unauthorised channels in MENA over the past three years, with WHO and national regulators issuing repeated alerts. For Saudi patients with a legitimate type 2 diabetes diagnosis and prescription, the named-patient pathway is the lawful, documented alternative: DSCSA-traceable supply from a US authorised distributor with end-to-end chain-of-custody, validated cold-chain logistics, and a clinical letter that anchors the case to the FDA label. The pathway exists for continuity of legitimate therapy, not for weight management.

The SFDA Personal Importation Program for Ozempic

The SFDA Personal Importation Program allows a Saudi-licensed physician to request import of a specific medicine for a specific named patient when the medicine is approved by a recognised reference authority (typically the US FDA, EMA, MHRA, PMDA Japan, or Health Canada) and a clinically equivalent locally registered alternative is not suitable for that patient. Applications are filed through the dispensing institution's import pharmacy and reviewed by SFDA's Drug Sector through the Ghad digital platform.

For Ozempic the clinical-justification angle is indication-specific and stocking-driven. A complete application typically includes:

- A clinical justification letter from the treating endocrinologist or internist naming the on-label indication (type 2 diabetes; T2D with established CVD; or T2D with CKD), the patient's HbA1c trajectory, prior therapy history (typically metformin plus a second agent), the documented Ozempic regimen and dose, and the local stocking issue preventing continuity, with ICD-10 coding
- The treating physician's SCFHS license verification in endocrinology, diabetology, internal medicine, nephrology (for CKD cases), or cardiology (for CVD secondary prevention)
- The patient identifier in SFDA's required format for the named-patient case file
- Product details: Ozempic (semaglutide injection), the specific pen presentation (0.25/0.5 mg, 1 mg, or 2 mg pen), manufacturer Novo Nordisk, country of origin, pack size, quantity requested, lot and expiry
- The destination dispensing facility license number for the SFDA-licensed pharmacy that will receive and store the refrigerated product
- A cold-chain plan from the US authorised distributor through international transit with continuous temperature monitoring and excursion logging, to the receiving Saudi pharmacy

Approval timelines for routine cases (registered drug with a clear on-label indication and documented prior use) typically run 10 to 21 business days. Cases with off-label language in the clinical letter, ambiguous indication coding, or any reference to weight management are flagged and either declined at Reserve Meds intake or returned to the prescriber for revision. Reserve Meds will not process Ozempic requests routed to weight management; that inquiry redirects to the standing-orders escalation queue.

Where Ozempic gets dispensed in Saudi Arabia

Ozempic is a 2 to 8 degrees Celsius cold-chain biologic and must be stored under continuous refrigeration until first use. The dispensing footprint in the Kingdom is therefore the SFDA-licensed pharmacy network with validated refrigeration capability. The institutions that handle named-patient imports of injectable biologics as established practice include the diabetes and endocrinology services at King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre (KFSH&RC) in Riyadh and Jeddah; King Abdulaziz Medical City (KAMC) and the Ministry of National Guard Health Affairs network (MNGHA); the diabetes centers at Dr. Sulaiman Al Habib Medical Group (HMG) across Riyadh, Jeddah, and the Eastern Province; Saudi German Health endocrinology; Dr. Soliman Fakeeh Hospital in Jeddah; and Dallah Hospital in Riyadh. Many private endocrinology clinics in Riyadh and Jeddah route their named-patient files through an SFDA-licensed specialty importer that holds the institutional license and refrigeration capacity.

The receiving pharmacy must inspect the temperature data logger on arrival, document the receipt under the conditions in the PIP file (typically 2 to 8 degrees Celsius), and dispense to the named patient only. Once a pen is removed from refrigeration for first use, it may be stored at room temperature up to 30 degrees Celsius for up to 56 days, which gives families operational flexibility once the pen is in their hands.

Real cost picture for Ozempic in Saudi Arabia

US wholesale acquisition cost for Ozempic is approximately USD 997 per 30-day pen across all three pen presentations, which equates to roughly USD 12,000 per year before any rebates or assistance. Novo Nordisk has announced a WAC reduction effective 1 January 2027 that would bring US list price to approximately USD 675 per pen. The Saudi riyal is pegged to the US dollar at approximately 3.75 SAR to 1 USD, so monthly US WAC translates to roughly SAR 3,740 per pen, with named-patient acquisition typically running modestly higher to cover US specialty-distributor handling. The Reserve Meds firm quote is itemised: drug cost, international cold-chain logistics, SFDA permit handling, and coordinator fee, each shown separately.

International cold-chain logistics for Ozempic typically runs USD 800 to USD 1,500 per shipment (approximately SAR 3,000 to SAR 5,600), driven by validated refrigerated shippers, phase-change materials, and continuous temperature loggers. SFDA permit handling fees are nominal. On the insurance side, Bupa Arabia, Tawuniya, and MedGulf Arabia each assess named-patient imports case by case; some plans reimburse partially when the product is on their formulary even if not currently stocked. Reserve Meds supplies the documentation; the claim itself remains with you or your hospital. Cash-pay is the default operating posture for cross-border access.

Typical timeline for Ozempic in Saudi Arabia

For an established Ozempic patient with a clear on-label clinical letter and a current prescription, the typical end-to-end cycle is 4 to 7 weeks. The SFDA PIP step generally runs 10 to 21 business days. US-side sourcing through an authorised distributor adds approximately 1 to 2 weeks, and validated cold-chain transit with Saudi customs clearance typically adds 3 to 5 days. Pen presentation (0.25/0.5 mg starter, 1 mg, or 2 mg) is locked at firm-quote issuance because allocation and price differ by SKU. Timelines are presented as typical ranges, not promises.

What your physician needs to provide

The clinical justification letter for Ozempic is the centrepiece of the SFDA package. For this product the letter typically includes:

- The patient's confirmed type 2 diabetes diagnosis with ICD-10 coding, and where applicable the established cardiovascular disease history or the chronic kidney disease staging for the CV-risk and CKD indications
- Prior therapy history, typically metformin plus a second agent, and the rationale for adding or continuing semaglutide
- The documented Ozempic regimen and dose, with confirmation of the titration history (0.25 mg starter for 4 weeks, then 0.5 mg, with possible escalation to 1 mg or 2 mg as tolerated and indicated)
- The local stocking issue or continuity gap preventing access through the standard Saudi retail or hospital channel

- The monitoring plan: symptoms of thyroid C-cell tumors (neck mass, dysphagia, hoarseness), acute pancreatitis, gallbladder disease, acute kidney injury particularly with GI adverse events and volume depletion, diabetic retinopathy progression in patients with prior retinopathy, and hypoglycemia monitoring when used with insulin or insulin secretagogues
- The contraindications acknowledgement: personal or family history of medullary thyroid carcinoma or Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia syndrome type 2 (boxed warning)
- The SFDA pharmacovigilance commitment for the full course of therapy

Any letter that references weight management, off-label use, or a non-T2D indication is declined at Reserve Meds intake. The boxed warning for thyroid C-cell tumors is acknowledged on every case.

Common questions about Ozempic in Saudi Arabia

Will Bupa Arabia, Tawuniya, or MedGulf cover Ozempic? Each insurer assesses named-patient imports case by case. Some plans reimburse partially when Ozempic is on their formulary even if not currently stocked locally; many require pre-authorization with the clinical justification letter attached. Reserve Meds does not promise coverage. We supply the documentation set that lets your insurer assess the case.

Can Reserve Meds help me with semaglutide for weight loss? No. Reserve Meds coordinates Ozempic strictly within the FDA-approved type 2 diabetes label (including the CVD and CKD indications). Wegovy is the FDA-approved obesity brand of semaglutide and is a separate product. Patients seeking semaglutide for weight management should consult their physician about Wegovy and the appropriate local pathway.

What about counterfeit pens in regional channels? Counterfeit and diverted semaglutide has been a documented problem in MENA gray-market channels since 2023. Reserve Meds sources only from US authorized distributors with DSCSA traceability and ships under validated cold-chain with continuous temperature logging. The chain-of-custody documentation accompanies every shipment. Authenticity is the value proposition.

What is the safety profile? Ozempic carries a boxed warning for risk of thyroid C-cell tumors based on rodent carcinogenicity studies. It is contraindicated in patients with personal or family history of medullary thyroid carcinoma or MEN 2. The most common adverse reactions are gastrointestinal: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, constipation. Acute pancreatitis, gallbladder disease, acute kidney injury, and diabetic retinopathy progression are labeled warnings.

Do I need to start at the lowest dose? Yes. The label requires a 4-week starter at 0.25 mg for gastrointestinal tolerability, then 0.5 mg for at least 4 weeks, with escalation to 1 mg or 2 mg as additional glycemic control is needed. Titration is mandatory.

Can I have the pen delivered to my home? The dispensing facility must be SFDA-licensed. For Ozempic the medicine moves into a hospital outpatient pharmacy or a specialised SFDA-licensed import pharmacy with validated refrigeration, and you collect it from there for self-administration at home. Direct-to-home delivery without a licensed dispensing facility in the chain is not the model.

Where Reserve Meds fits in Ozempic cases

Reserve Meds is a US-based concierge coordinator. We do not replace your endocrinologist, do not replace SFDA, and do not replace the dispensing pharmacy. For Ozempic specifically we orchestrate the US-side sourcing through an authorised distributor with DSCSA traceability, the regulatory documentation kit your physician needs (on-label clinical letter template, titration reference, monitoring plan summary, SFDA pharmacovigilance reference), validated cold-chain logistics with continuous temperature logging, and a single named coordinator who carries the case from intake through quarterly refills. Reserve Meds will not process inquiries that reference weight management; those are redirected at intake. The chain-of-custody documentation is the differentiator against gray-market channels in the Kingdom.

Next step

If your treating physician has documented your type 2 diabetes (or T2D with CVD or CKD), and local stocking is the bottleneck for your Ozempic continuity, the named-patient pathway through SFDA is the route. Join the waitlist below and we will confirm eligibility within 24 to 48 hours and route the documentation kit to your physician.

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Review & oversight. Content on this page is reviewed by Reserve Meds's clinical and regulatory team. A US-licensed pharmacist reviews every prescription before dispensing. Regulatory posture is informational, not legal advice; case-specific questions route to retained outside counsel. Review methodology >

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