

Fear of needles has cost the NHS £682 million and kept millions from weight loss treatment

- Fear of needles has contributed to an estimated 19.5 million missed NHS appointments across Britain, costing approximately £682 million¹
- Nearly one in five (19%) people interested in weight loss medication say needle aversion is a primary barrier to treatment
- More than half (53%) of people considering weight loss medication say they would take a pill compared to 24% who would consider an injection, as oral weight loss medications are expected to reach the UK.

London, UK – Fear of needles has contributed to an estimated 19.5 million missed NHS appointments across Britain, costing the health service approximately £682 million, while also preventing millions from accessing obesity treatment, according to new research from digital healthcare provider Numan.

The findings come as the first oral GLP-1 weight loss medications prepare to enter the UK market, potentially opening access to patients who have previously avoided injectable treatments altogether. As with all obesity treatments, suitability should be determined through an appropriate clinical assessment.

A survey of 2,000 UK adults commissioned by Numan² found that around 28% of Brits have delayed or avoided a medical appointment because it involved a needle. Among those who are overweight or obese who also report needle aversion, that figure rises to 58%.

The research suggests the issue is also significantly limiting uptake of current injectable obesity medications. Nearly one in five (19%) people interested in weight loss medication say needle aversion is a primary barrier to treatment.

The arrival of oral GLP-1 medications could improve accessibility for some patients who may have previously avoided injectable treatments. Half (50%) of those considering weight loss medication say they would take a pill, compared to just 24% who would consider an injection.

Meanwhile, nearly nine in ten (88%) people already using injectable weight loss medication say they would consider switching to a tablet alternative.

Dr Tsolmon Tsogbayar, Senior Clinical Product Lead at Numan, comments:

“Needle aversion is something we see regularly in clinical practice. There are many people who have wanted support with their weight for years but have

¹ Data on file. Numan. Last accessed May 2026.

² An Attest survey commissioned by Numan conducted on 2,000 UK adults between Friday 1st May 2026 – Tuesday 5th May 2026.

struggled with the idea of injectable treatment, in some cases avoiding healthcare settings involving needles altogether.

The arrival of oral GLP-1 medication is therefore hugely significant because it has the potential to make evidence-based obesity treatment accessible to a much wider group of patients who previously felt excluded from the current options available.

However, it's important that patients understand these medications are not a silver bullet. Obesity is a long-term condition, in order to successfully manage it requires behavioural change, lifestyle support and ongoing clinical care alongside medication. Treatment should be viewed as the beginning of the journey, not the end of it."

More than a quarter (26%) say concerns about regaining weight after stopping medication are a barrier to beginning treatment. This further supports the importance of pairing medication with behavioural support, lifestyle change and long-term clinical care rather than viewing obesity medication as a standalone solution.

However, the research also highlighted concerns that the launch of oral GLP-1s has the potential to escalate unsafe or unregulated access to the drugs.

More than one in ten (11%) respondents say their first port of call for accessing oral weight loss medication would be unregulated sellers such as beauticians, personal trainers or social media sellers. If affordability or NHS access became a barrier, nearly four in ten (38%) say they would consider turning to unregulated sources.

The findings also indicate widespread recognition that medication alone is not enough to address obesity sustainably. Just 27% of respondents believe weight loss medication alone is sufficient to address obesity in the UK.

Dr Tsolmon Tsogbayer adds:

"As awareness of oral weight loss medications grows, it's vital that patients access treatment through regulated providers with appropriate clinical oversight and ongoing support in place.

These medications are powerful tools, but they are not consumer products that should be bought casually through social media or unregulated sellers. Safe and effective obesity treatment requires proper assessment, monitoring and support to help patients manage side effects and build healthier habits.

"The future of obesity care cannot just be about improving access to medication. It must also be about improving access to safe, evidence-based care around it."

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

For more information, please visit the Numan website [www.numan.com] or contact the PR team [numan@thephagroup.com]

About Numan

Numan is on a mission to help people live happier, healthier, longer lives. We offer personalised, integrated care in one digital platform – including clinical guidance, medication, behavioural health coaching, diagnostics and supplements, to help patients take control of their health. Our focus is on supporting people with stigmatised diseases and conditions - such as obesity and testosterone deficiency - which traditionally are undertreated, mistreated or misunderstood.

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About the Survey

- Survey of 2,000+ UK adults
- Nationally representative
- Commissioned by Numan and conducted by Attest
- Data captured between Friday 1st May 2026 – Tuesday 5th May 2026.

Headline stat based off 28% (those who have missed appointments due to fear of needles) of the population being 19.5m and each missed NHS appointment costing £35, totalling £682m.