

HEALTH

A woman who lost 100 pounds on semaglutide shared 3 ways the holiday season has changed — including not feeling the need to diet in the new year

[Rachel Hosie](#) Dec 27, 2024, 2:05 AM PST



Octavio Jones for BI



- **Ashley Dunham's experience of the festive season changed after she started using a weight loss drug in 2022.**
- **Semaglutide, one of several appetite suppressing drugs called GLP-1s, helped dampen her "food noise."**
- **Several of Dunham's family members are also on GLP-1s, and their Thanksgiving food bill is much lower now.**

The holiday season used to be conflicting for [Ashley Dunham](#).

It was a joyous time to get together with family and friends over delicious food and drinks. But as someone who wanted to lose weight, navigating that brought internal turmoil and what felt like tests of her willpower.

Between Christmas and Thanksgiving, she expected to gain 15 pounds "just by eating pretty regularly, how I would typically eat for the holiday," she told Business Insider. And then came the grueling diets in January.

Now, everything is different.

In August 2022, Dunham, 33, from St John's, Florida, started taking a compounded form of the buzzy weight loss drug semaglutide (marketed as Ozempic and Wegovy).

The appetite-suppressing medication silenced the "food noise" in Dunham's head, meaning she ate less without trying and no longer felt guilty when she did eat. She also found she had more mental capacity to think about things aside from weight loss.

With family and friends now also on similar medications, known as GLP-1 agonists, Dunham's festive get-togethers have changed drastically, she said.

Her family isn't alone: The KFF Health Tracking Poll estimated in June 2024 that one in eight Americans either take or has taken one of these medications. While the drugs have been game-changing for many, others have experienced negative side effects, such as nausea and constipation that was so bad that they came off them.

Dunham experienced nausea, migraines, and constipation in her first few months on the medication but they faded with time.



Ashley Dunham during Christmastime 2019 (left) and in 2024. Ashley Dunham

Dunham used to gain weight every holiday season

2024 is Dunham's third holiday season on the weight loss drug.

In 2022, the year she started semaglutide, injecting it once a week, she lost 12 pounds between Thanksgiving and Christmas. "I could barely finish my plate," she said.

After 17 months on the medication, Dunham transitioned to what she described as a maintenance dose, which she continues to take every 10 to 14 days. In 2023, she was able to finish her plates of food, but prioritized protein and was satisfied without overindulging. Those on GLP-1s are advised to eat a high-protein diet and regularly exercise, including strength training, to minimize muscle loss.

Before taking semaglutide, Dunham used to tell herself she couldn't have any festive treats and then feel guilty if she did.

Now, she said she can happily go to festive events, enjoy one drink and one cookie, and be satisfied.

"I'm not scared that the cookie is going to have some negative repercussion," Dunham said. "I've lost a lot of the guilt from enjoying the holidays."

Dunham's Thanksgiving food shop was significantly smaller this year

Ashley Dunham at home in December 2023. Octavio Jones for BI

At her Thanksgiving table this year, half the group was on a weight loss medication, Dunham said.

This meant that instead of buying and preparing green beans for 10, for example, Dunham cooked for six to reduce food waste, she said.

Dunham lives with her husband and six-year-old son, and since he started using GLP-1s five months ago, the family's grocery bill has

dropped by about 50%, Dunham said.

"On a crazy month, we would typically spend \$1,200 or £1,300 on groceries, but now we spend more like \$600 or \$700," she said.

She no longer makes weight loss New Year's resolutions

Before taking semaglutide, Dunham would resolve to lose weight at the start of every year.

"I don't really recall a year, even when I was in a smaller body, that I didn't have a resolution to lose weight," Dunham said. "Even when I was really skinny, it was always just about losing weight."

At the turn of 2024, for the first time, Dunham decided she no longer needed to.

Dunham said semaglutide has also come with cognitive benefits, such as improved focus. Her goals were to read more books and achieve things that had nothing to do with her weight, food, or calories.

"It was so freeing," Dunham said, "and a little jarring too because when your life no longer revolves around your weight, you have so much more brain space to actually achieve for your greater good, and even the greater good of society. Who knows?"