

# press release

## **Novo Nordisk to unveil data showing semaglutide tackles the liver disease crisis affecting about 1 in 3 people living with overweight and obesity worldwide**

- Trial liver safety data from the 'ESSENCE' trial confirm semaglutide's favourable hepatic profile in patients with Metabolic Dysfunction-associated Steatohepatitis (MASH), addressing a critical concern for clinicians treating a disease with historically limited and poorly tolerated options.
- New subgroup analyses — including the first dedicated Japanese MASH population data and women in menopause — show semaglutide's benefits extend broadly, underscoring its potential to serve the full, diverse spectrum of patients living with this silent epidemic, with nine out of 10 cases undiagnosed globally.
- Real-world evidence presented at EASL Congress 2026 reveals the devastating and largely hidden challenge of MASH: significant impairment in quality of life, soaring healthcare costs, and a patient population that remains critically underdiagnosed and undertreated.

**Bagsværd, Denmark, 19 May 2026** – At the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) Annual Congress 2026 on 27-30 May in Barcelona, Spain, Novo Nordisk is presenting a comprehensive portfolio of new data highlighting a long-overdue spotlight on metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis — better known as MASH — a progressive and potentially fatal liver disease that affects an estimated 250 million people globally, yet remains widely unrecognised, undiagnosed and untreated<sup>1</sup>.

MASH, the more advanced and inflammatory form of metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD), causes scarring of the liver (fibrosis), can progress to cirrhosis, liver failure, and liver cancer, and is now one of the leading causes of liver transplantation in the Western world<sup>2</sup>. Patients have been left without options, and globally, 9 out of 10 cases are undiagnosed. Despite its staggering prevalence and disproportionate inclusion of those living with obesity, type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome, until very recently, there were no approved pharmacological treatments.

New data presented by Novo Nordisk across multiple sessions at EASL 2026 build on the groundbreaking ESSENCE Phase 3 programme, which previously demonstrated that semaglutide 2.4 mg — Novo Nordisk's GLP-1 receptor agonist — significantly reduced liver inflammation and fibrosis in MASH patients. The new analyses deepen the clinical picture significantly:

- The **ESSENCE Liver Safety analysis** (Newsome et al.) provides critical reassurance to hepatologists and treating physicians, demonstrating a favourable hepatic safety profile for semaglutide 2.4 mg, regardless of patient characteristics, the only GLP-1 RA clinically proven to renew liver health in patients with MASH — a population with inherently vulnerable liver function where treatment safety is paramount<sup>3</sup>.
- The **ESSENCE Menopause subgroup** (Abdelmalek et al.) addresses a vastly underserved group: women in menopause, in whom hormonal changes are known to accelerate liver disease progression and metabolic deterioration. This analysis provides new, targeted evidence for a population that has historically been excluded or underrepresented in liver disease trials<sup>4</sup>.
- The **ESSENCE Japanese subgroup analysis** (Nakajima et al.) extends the evidence base to Asian patient populations, where MASLD and MASH occur at lower body weight thresholds and carry unique metabolic and genetic risk profiles — a critical step toward global applicability and equitable access to effective treatment<sup>5</sup>.

“The science we are sharing this week moves us closer to a future where MASH is caught early, treated effectively, and is no longer overlooked. That is what drives us — the people behind these numbers and their unmet needs,” said David Ørsted, vice president, Global Medical Affairs Obesity & MASH at Novo Nordisk. “Our clinical data presented at EASL 2026, led by semaglutide, reflect our continued commitment to ensuring that people living with MASH receive timely evidence-based care. A commitment that no patient should fall through the cracks; that women going through menopause deserve evidence-based care for their liver, and that patients in Japan, in the UK, in Germany and across the world deserve access to treatments that work for them.”

In addition to clinical data presented at EASL Congress 2026, Novo Nordisk is proud to support the ‘Love Your Liver’ initiative, which will provide education and on-site testing for MASH during the conference.

### **About metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis (MASH)**

MASH is a serious, progressive metabolic disease affecting the liver, which can be fatal if not managed properly<sup>6</sup>. More than 250 million people live with MASH,<sup>1</sup> and the number of individuals in advanced stages of the disease is expected to increase over 160% from 2015 to 2030<sup>7</sup>. Of those living with overweight or obesity, more than one in three also have MASH<sup>8</sup>. And of those currently living with MASH, more than 40% have type 2 diabetes, and more than 8 in 10

also live with obesity<sup>9</sup>. People living with MASH often have many other health-related comorbidities<sup>10</sup>, such as cardiovascular disease, which worsens with each stage of MASH and is the leading cause of death in people with MASH<sup>11,12</sup>.

Due to few and nonspecific symptoms in its early stages<sup>6</sup>, nearly 90% of people with MASH remain undiagnosed<sup>13</sup>. Once MASH progresses to late stages, there is increased mortality and morbidity, including potential for cirrhosis, liver cancer, and need for liver transplant<sup>14</sup>.

### **About Wegovy®**

Wegovy® is approved as once-daily Wegovy® pill (semaglutide 25 mg) by the FDA, and once-weekly Wegovy® injection (2.4 mg and 7.2 mg) is approved by the FDA, the EMA and other regulatory authorities worldwide<sup>15,16</sup>. The Wegovy® pill is currently pending marketing approval from the EMA and other regulatory authorities. Wegovy® is indicated to reduce excess body weight and maintain weight reduction long term in adults with obesity or overweight and in the presence of at least one weight-related comorbid condition. It is approved by the FDA to reduce the risk of major adverse cardiovascular events, such as death, heart attack or stroke in adults with known heart disease and either obesity or overweight<sup>6,7</sup>. Furthermore, Wegovy® injection is indicated to reduce excess body weight and maintain long-term weight reduction in paediatric patients aged 12 years and older<sup>6,7</sup>. It is approved by the FDA for the treatment of MASH in adults with moderate to advanced liver scarring (fibrosis), but not in those with cirrhosis of the liver<sup>6</sup>. Semaglutide has been extensively examined in clinical development programmes and real-world evidence studies and has cumulatively accumulated 49 million patient-years of exposure.

### **About Novo Nordisk**

*Novo Nordisk is a leading global healthcare company founded in 1923 and headquartered in Denmark. Our purpose is to drive change to defeat serious chronic diseases built upon our heritage in diabetes. We do so by pioneering scientific breakthroughs, expanding access to our medicines, and working to prevent and ultimately cure disease. Novo Nordisk employs about 67,900 people in 80 countries and markets its products in around 170 countries. For more information, visit [novonordisk.com](https://www.novonordisk.com), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).*

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## References

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