

WEIGHT GAIN

This module provides information about weight gain for people with schizophrenia.

IT IS VERY EASY TO GAIN WEIGHT if you eat more than your body needs, if you have a medical condition that makes you gain weight, if you are taking certain medications, or if you are predisposed because of your genetic make-up.

People with an illness, such as diabetes, arthritis, or schizophrenia, may gain weight while taking their medications. This module provides information for people with schizophrenia who are taking medications, including:

- Medications and weight gain
- Assessing your risk of weight gain
- How to manage your weight.



Not everyone who takes antipsychotic medications will necessarily gain weight. You should speak with your healthcare provider about which antipsychotic medication is right for you, and whether you need to change your dose or type of medication.



Medications and weight gain

Some of the medicines that you are taking for your illness may increase your appetite, or you may not feel full after eating a meal that would normally have satisfied your hunger. If you take in more calories than you use through exercise and/or for your daily living, then you will eventually gain weight. Also, some medications may make you feel drowsy so you may be less active and less motivated, and therefore more likely to gain weight.

If you gain weight while taking your medications, you may think about stopping them. But this is usually not a good idea. For example, stopping antipsychotic medications will increase your risk of having another psychotic episode. Not everyone who takes antipsychotic medications will necessarily gain weight. Weight gain with antipsychotic medications may be very small, from around 0.5 kg; or may be greater, up to 5.0 kg over a year. And the risk of gaining weight may differ depending on the type of antipsychotic drug that you are taking. You should speak with your healthcare provider about which antipsychotic medication is right for you, and whether you need to change your dose or type of medication.

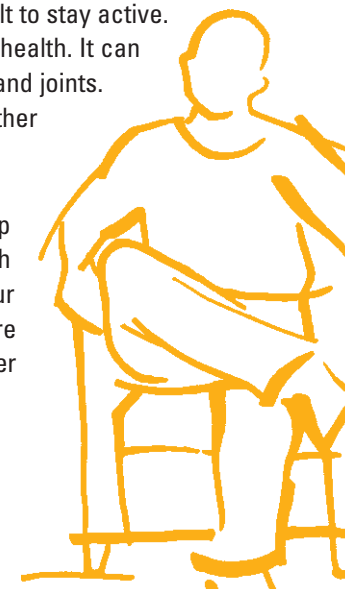
“I stopped taking my medication as it was making me fat. It was only after talking to my doctor, changing my medication and trying to eat more healthy that I realised I could take my pills AND control my weight.”



Assessing your risk of weight gain

Being overweight is not desirable for many people. Overweight or obesity can cause social problems and poor self esteem. People who are overweight are often more tired and sometimes find it more difficult to stay active. Just as important, weight gain may be harmful to your health. It can put added strain on your heart, as well as your bones and joints. Too much weight gain can also increase your risk of other health problems.

For many people, even just a small weight loss will help reduce the risk of health problems. Remember to weigh yourself regularly to keep an eye on your weight. If your clothes are becoming too tight and you feel that you are gaining weight, then check with your healthcare provider for help.



It is difficult to know who will gain weight while taking antipsychotic medications. Some people may only gain a small amount of weight, which levels off after the first 3 months to a year.

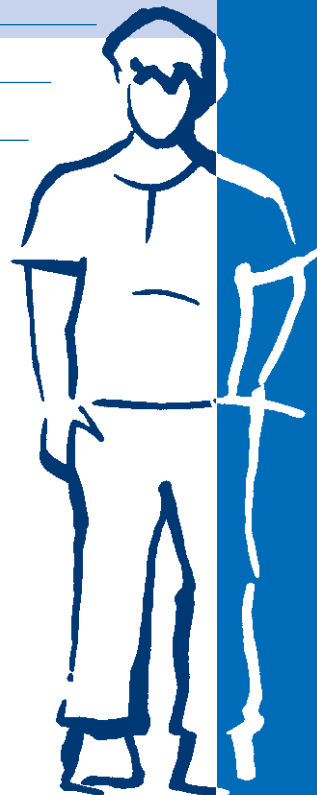
Other medications may also cause you to gain weight, such as hormone-replacement drugs, and anti-arthritis drugs.

It is therefore important to inform your healthcare provider of all the medicines that you are taking, including over-the-counter drugs.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Make a note of ALL your drugs (prescribed, unprescribed including recreational) here to enable your doctor or nurse to identify which, if any are affecting your weight.

"I was putting on lots of weight, I felt ashamed and angry - another thing was wrong with me. My nurse told me to talk to the doctor - they changed my medication and encouraged me to be healthy."



HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF?

There is a lot of information available on how to lose weight, but one of the biggest problems is trying to sort out the fact from current 'quick-fix diet', and working out what will work best for you. Here are some useful tips to help you to help yourself get started:

- Speak to your doctor if you gain weight for no apparent reason and/or if you need help managing your weight.
- If you need to lose weight, set yourself a realistic target, such as losing 0.5 kg every one or two weeks. Try not to be over ambitious, as you may do more harm than good.
- Work out what your downfalls are, such as overeating, or not exercising enough. Then set yourself a plan on how you can best change your lifestyle and/or behaviours to achieve a more healthy weight.

There are several methods that you can use to get an idea of whether or not you are overweight, including:

- Body mass index (BMI)
- Waist circumference

ASSESSING YOUR BMI

- To use the BMI table, you need to know your height in centimetres and your weight in kilograms.
- Find your weight in the left-hand column labelled Weight (kilograms).
- Move your finger across to the right of the table until you find your height in the top column labelled Height (centimetres).
- The number in the box of that column is the BMI for your weight and height.

		Height (centimetres)																
		150	152.5	155	157.5	160	162.5	165	167.5	170	172.5	175	177.5	180	182.5	185	187.5	190
Weight (kilograms)	45	20	19	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	14	14	14	13	13	12	12
	47	21	20	19	19	18	17	17	16	16	16	15	15	14	14	13	13	13
	50	21	21	20	19	19	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	14	14	13	13	13
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111	48	46	45	43	42	41	40	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	31	30	
114	49	47	46	44	43	42	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	

□ Undreweight ■ OK □ Overweight ■ Obese

EXERCISE

Exercise is an important component of your overall health. It not only keeps you physically fit but also keeps you mentally fit. Exercise gives you a greater sense of well being, increases your self esteem, and reduces anxiety, depression, and stress. It is also a great way to lose or control weight. Remember to not start too hard or too fast. You may cause some injury or pain, and feel discouraged from continuing your exercise programme. Keep the following points in mind as you get started with your programme:

- See your healthcare provider before starting. Your healthcare provider can advise you on how much and how often you should exercise.
- Remember that walking is a great exercise and does not cost you anything.
- Do some exercise that you enjoy, such as walking the dog, swimming, tennis, or riding a bike.
- Give yourself a trial period to monitor your progress – for example, keep a note of how many times you exercise in a week and for how long. Try to increase the length and/or number of times that you exercise each week.
- Try exercising with a friend.
- Wear comfortable clothing that is appropriate for your exercise.
- Join a community sports club and exercise with others.

You should stop exercising if you experience any of the following:

- You feel unwell
- Dizzy or light headed
- Pain
- An abnormal heart rhythm.

You should rest and contact your healthcare provider if your symptoms persist.



*I walk my friends dog. I really enjoy it
- and so does the dog.*