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

			neight (Centimeties)															
		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
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	61	26	26	25	24	23	22	22	21	21	20	19	19	18	18	17	17	16
	63	27	26	26	25	24	23	23	22	21	21	20	20	19	18	18	17	17
	66	28	27	27	26	25	24	23	23	22	21	21	20	20	19	19	18	18
	68	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	23	23	22	22	21	20	20	19	19	18
	70	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21	20	20	19	19
	72	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21	21	20	19
	75	32	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21	21	20
	77	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21	21
	79	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21
	82	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22
	84	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	23
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	93	40	39	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	29	28	27	26	26	25
	95	41	40	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	28	27	26	26
	98	42	41	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	28	27	26
	100	43	42	40	39	38	37	36	34	33	32	32	31	30	29	28	27	27
	102	44	43	41	40	39	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	31	30	29	28	27
	104	45	43	42	41	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	30	29	28
	107	46	44	43	42	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	29
	109	47	45	44	43	41	40	39	38	36	35	34	33	33	32	31	30	29
	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



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)

📃 OK

Overweight



HOW CAN I MANAGE MY WEIGHT?

If you need to lose weight or just maintain your current weight, you may have to change your diet and lifestyle. Some people prefer to lose weight on their own, while others like the support of a structured programme. If you decide to join any kind of weight-control programme, the following can help you get started.

Diet

Here are some helpful hints on:

Improving your eating habits

- Avoid snacking on high-fat foods, such as fatty meats, potato crisps and other deep-fried foods, or those high in sugar, such as cakes, sweets and ice-cream.
- Try to eat regular meals.
- Avoid excess fast foods (such as hamburgers and deep-fried foods).
- Think about preparing a healthy snack or meal in advance.
- Think about your food portion sizes and whether you need to reduce them. Try to avoid serving large portions, or buy smaller portions from the supermarket.
- Try to drink less fizzy drinks that contain lots of sugar.

Controlling your hunger

- When you feel hungry, do something active, such as housework, wash the car or go for a walk.
- Have a drink of water or other sugar-free beverages.
- Chew sugar-free gum or suck on sugar-free mints.
- Snack on carrot and celery sticks, or other low-fat healthy foods.

Monitoring your weight

Date Image: Constraint of the state of the

EATING HEALTHILY

Some foods contain very little nutritional value or have ingredients that can increase your risk of disease. Eating healthily does not mean giving up all the foods that you like to eat. It just means eating these foods in moderation, and trying to increase your intake of foods that are high in nutritional value.

The foods and food ingredients that you should try to limit include:

- Fat which is high in sausages, bacon, butter, ice cream, and some salad dressings.
- Cholesterol which is high in egg yolks, cheese, and fatty meats.
- Salt which is usually added to foods such as nuts, potato crisps and many fast foods.
- Alcohol.
- Sugar which is high in sweets, cakes, and many fizzy drinks.

The foods that you should try to eat most of include:

- Fruits and vegetables which are rich in vitamins and minerals.
- Wholegrain breads, cereals, rice, and pasta which are high in fibre and/or carbohydrates.
- Meat, fish, legumes, and soy products which are high in protein.
- Remember to drink plenty of water, at least 2 litres a day.



MENU PLANNER FOR THE DAY

Here are two daily meal plans – one is high in fats and sugar, and the other is a healthy alternative.

	Menu high in fat and sugar	Healthy alternative menu
eakfast	 Cereals that are high in fat and sugar, such as toasted muesli and chocolate cereals. Toast with lashings of high-fat and/or sugar-spreads, and/or fried bacon. Glass of fruit drink and/or flavoured milk that are high in sugar. 	 Cereals that are low in fat and sugar, such as bran flakes or natural muesli – try to avoid adding sugar. Toast with sliced tomato, low-fat cheese, or a thin spread of your favourite topping. Try to avoid using fat on your toast, or just use a thin spread. Glass of freshly squeezed juice / sugar- free bottled juice, and/or glass of milk.
nch	 A hamburger with egg and cheese. Fried sausages on toast with extra fat on toast. Two glasses of beer. 	 A meat/cheese and salad sandwich with wholegrain bread. Baked beans on toast. Try to avoid adding fat to your toast. One small glass of beer and one glass of water, or two glasses of water.
iner	 Deep-fried fish and chips with mayonnaise. Salad with creamy or oily dressing. Pasta with creamy sauce and lots of cheese. Two glasses of wine. 	 Grilled fish with boiled vegetables and low-fat sauce. Salad with vinaigrette or low- fat dressing. Pasta with tomato/vegetable or low- fat sauce and small serving of cheese. One glass of wine and one glass of water, or two glasses of water.
acks	 Chocolate bars. Potato crisps. Fried potatoes. Cake and ice cream. Nuts that are salted and roasted in fat. Fizzy drinks that are loaded with sugar. 	 Fruit. Raw vegetables such as carrot and celery sticks with fresh salsa. Rice crackers or pita bread with cottage cheese. A serve of low-fat yoghurt. Drink plenty of water.

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.

