



Obesity

Accessible information about obesity
for adults with mental health problems





Obesity reduces life expectancy by on average nine years

Why is weight so important?

Being overweight or obese can lead to health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and some cancers. It can also affect the way we feel about ourselves, our mood and sleep. Obesity reduces life expectancy by on average nine years and causes 9000 early deaths each year in England.

We know that people with serious mental illness (SMI) are more likely to be overweight or obese. This can be due to medications they are prescribed which can cause weight gain or the lifestyles they lead.

Do I want to change my weight?

If you are overweight, reducing weight by 5-10% reduces your risk of all the above health conditions. You may want to lose weight to:

Why you may want to lose weight

- ✓ **Improve your health by reducing the risk of long term health conditions**
- ✓ **Reduce pain in back, hip and knee joints**
- ✓ **Reduce breathlessness**
- ✓ **Fit into your clothes better or more comfortably**
- ✓ **Join in with activities more easily**

Whatever reason you have it needs to be important to you. Weight loss and maintenance of weight loss involves lifestyle changes which can be difficult, so it is important that you are ready and willing to make these changes for life.





If you feel you need to alter your medication due to weight gain you need to speak with your doctor and voice your concerns before you make any changes to your medication regime.

Medication

It is true that some medications such as clozapine, olanzapine and lithium can lead to weight gain. This can happen in a number of different ways including an increase in appetite which can lead to an increased energy intake. Research suggests that weight gain is greatest in the first 6-12 months of commencing treatment.

It is therefore important to limit weight gain during this time as much as possible to prevent long term health conditions associated with being overweight and obese. If you feel you need to alter your medication due to weight gain you need to speak with your doctor and voice your concerns before you make any changes to your medication regime.

Strategies that might help limit weight gain

To avoid weight gain when starting medication or to lose weight and keep it off, it is important that you make lifestyle changes and avoid 'dieting'. Changes should be something which you can maintain over a long period of time and not seen as a 'quick fix'. Making small changes to your diet over time can make maintaining change more achievable.

Tips for limiting weight gain



Try to eat regular meals.

If you miss meals, you may be more likely to snack through the day or overeat at your next meal.



Choose foods which are high in fibre

These foods include fruit and vegetables, lentils and beans or wholegrain varieties of foods such as breads, cereals and pasta. These will help keep you fuller for longer and reduce the need to snack.



Think about portion sizes

Too much of any food group can lead to weight gain. Aim to have half your plate full of salad and/ or vegetables, then equal portions of protein foods and carbohydrates.

Tips for limiting weight gain



Stay hydrated

With many medications a good fluid intake is important. Sometimes we can mistake feelings of hunger for thirst so if you are feeling hungry between meals, try having a drink first, leave it 20 minutes and if you still feel hungry chose a sensible snack such as a piece of fruit or a low calorie yogurt.



High calorie drinks such as energy drinks, milkshakes, fruit juice and full sugar drinks can add a lot of unnecessary calories to your diet

Try to choose no added sugar versions of these drinks, water, fruit or herbal teas.



Eat a variety of foods

Choose foods in line with the Eatwell Guide. All foods can be part of a healthy diet if eaten in the right amounts.



Be mindful of your eating patterns

Avoid eating whilst watching TV, if you can, eat at the table and take your time with meals and snacks. Try putting your knife and fork down between each mouthful, this can help to slow down eating and help recognise when you are full therefore preventing overeating.



Altered sleeping patterns can affect the way your body uses energy

You may be more likely to miss meals and replace these with high calorie snack foods if you are tired.



Use distraction techniques

These can include going out for a walk, reading a book, having a bath, knitting or a colouring book to avoid snacking out of habit rather than hunger.



Maintain or increase physical activity levels

For example by choosing activities you enjoy such as walking, football, swimming or cycling. At least 30 minutes of activity on 5 or more days per week is recommended for health and can help with weight management.



Don't supersize!
stick to regular
portions



Eating out/Takeaways

Everyone likes a takeaway now and again, you can still eat them occasionally and lose weight.

Try the following

- ✓ Order rice or naan - not both.
- ✓ Try dishes like tandoori.
- ✓ Choose boiled rice or noodles with tomato based sauces instead of creamy ones.
- ✓ Vegetable sides such as dhal can be a filling healthier option.
- ✓ Don't supersize! stick to regular portions.
- ✓ Choose a starter or pudding instead of both.

Goals

Tips

- ✓ Keep your goals achievable 1kg (2lb) per month means 12kg weight loss in a year (2 stone). That's a great achievement!
- ✓ Agree one diet change per week or per month and stick to it, maintain your goals and make new ones each week / month.
- ✓ Some people find commercial slimming groups a good way to maintain motivation to lose weight. Find out what is available in your area.
- ✓ Sometimes if you are unable to lose weight, preventing further weight gain can be a positive goal.
- ✓ Reward your hard work, think of something you would like to do and somewhere you would like to go, not food related and treat yourself once you have achieved your monthly goal.

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Resources:

DOM-uk. 2007 The Diabetic Weight Management Intervention for Adults in the One to One Setting Is it time for a Radical Rethink?

National Obesity Forum 2005. Obesity care pathway toolkit.

BDA food fact sheet. Weight Loss 2016

Amresh Shrivastava* and Megan E. Johnston Weight-Gain in Psychiatric Treatment: Risks, Implications, and Strategies for Prevention and Management

NICE 2014 Obesity: identification, assessment and management (CG189)