

Psychosis and physical health

+ YOUNG PEOPLE



Physical health is important for good mental health. Improving your diet and doing regular exercise can help you feel good, be more confident, and help your general wellbeing. Exercise and eating well are especially important when taking anti-psychotic medications. Medications are important to help you get better, but for some people, they can also have side effects, like putting on weight.

Why do some people taking medications for psychosis gain weight?

There is no one answer, but some possible reasons are:

- The medication can change your appetite, making you feel hungrier or making it harder to recognise that you're full.
- You may get a dry mouth and feel like drinking more sugary drinks.
- You may exercise less because you feel less energetic.
- The medications might cause cravings for fatty and sugary foods.

What do you need to do?

If you're worried about the side effects of medication, or notice that you're gaining weight, here are some things you can do to manage these changes:

- Eat healthily and be physically active.
- Start thinking about the exercise you do and what you eat as soon as possible after starting medication.
- Think about where you can make useful changes to your routine, such as taking the stairs, getting off the train a stop early, walking down to the shops.

- Ask for help with choosing healthy food and doing exercise – tell the people around you so they can help.
- It also helps to keep an eye on your weight and ask your case manager, clinician or doctor to measure your weight and height regularly.
- If you are worried about weight gain, talk to your case manager or doctor – one of their roles is to discuss these issues with you, and to keep an eye on any changes.
- Talk to your doctor about getting blood tests and your blood pressure checked regularly.

If you are concerned about side effects, talk with your doctor. There are some really easy ways to reduce or manage side effects. If the side effects are serious or distressing, and difficult to manage, your treating team may look at other medication options that may have less side effects.

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What checks should I have?

Blood tests

Blood tests look at:

- Glucose (sugar) levels – an indicator of risk of diabetes.
- Lipid (fat) levels – such as cholesterol (high 'bad' cholesterol increases the risk of heart disease and stroke).

Weight

Putting on too much weight for some people can increase the risk of diabetes and heart disease in the future.

Blood pressure

High blood pressure may also contribute to the development of heart disease in the future.

Further information

For more information about living a healthy lifestyle:
www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

For information on how to get into a routine of running:
www.c25k.com

For further information regarding mental health, or for information in other languages, visit:
www.orygen.org.au
www.headspace.org.au
www.sane.org
www.healthdirect.gov.au
www.oyh.org.au

Related factsheets

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