

NUTRITION SNACKS: MEDICATIONS IMPACTING WEIGHT

Some medicines can cause certain people to gain weight or make it more challenging to lose weight. This weight gain will depend on several factors such as the specific medicine, the age of the person, the health condition the medicines are treating and the persons diet and exercise.

HOW CAN MEDICATIONS IMPACT WEIGHT?

The reason why medicines can cause weight gain will vary depending on the medicine. For example, some medicines can increase appetite leaving someone feeling hungry, even after eating. Others will slow down the metabolism meaning the body burns energy slower than before. Some may cause water build up in the body and others may have an impact on how the body stores and absorbs fat, sugar or other nutrients.

There may also be flow on effects from medicines that leave a person short of breath and tired and impact their ability to do physical activity. And of course, there are some medications where researchers just don't know why weight gain happens.

WHICH MEDICATIONS COULD IMPACT WEIGHT?

Medicines commonly known to cause weight gain include:

- Medicines for diabetes
- Antipsychotic medicines
- Antidepressants
- Epilepsy medicines
- Steroid hormones or birth control pills, and
- Some blood pressure-reducing medicines.

Although it's common for these medication groups to have weight gain as a side effect, not all them will cause weight gain and the effects may not be the same for everyone. Some people may gain weight, others may not, and some may lose weight.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS

Members who are concerned their medication is causing weight gain or contributing to no weight loss should speak to their GP first. Often these medications are life critical and only their GP can discuss what options are available.

It's important to remember that just because a medication has weight gain as a side effect doesn't mean the member will gain weight or won't be able to lose weight.

In these instances, it can be helpful to discuss the importance of following the menu and menu adherence as they may have less wriggle room than others. Following the menu and keeping a record of foods and drinks consumed may also help when discussing the medications with the GP as they will be able to see the full picture.

It can also help for members to take their time eating their meals without distractions to help recognise hunger cues and to increase physical activity if possible.

KEY MESSAGES

1

Certain medications may impact weight gain in some people.

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If a member is concerned about their medications, they should speak to their GP.

3

If a member has been told they are on a medication that has weight gain as a side effect, they can reduce the impact with:

- Menu adherence
- Physical activity
- Taking time to eat meals without distractions.