Managing weight gain on antipsychotic medication

Places to Start

- **Uncontrollable hunger?**
- **Craving sugar?**
- **Getting up in the middle of the night to eat?**
- **Lacking motivation?**

This leaflet gives you some ideas from others with ‘lived experience’ to support you on your journey towards maintaining physical health and wellness.



Antipsychotic medication can be beneficial for your mental health but can have unwanted side effects, like increased appetite, uncontrollable hunger, and weight gain, which can:

- Be overwhelming.
- Increase anxiety and distress.
- Make you feel down and lack motivation.
- Be hard to manage.
- Negatively impact your physical health.

It is really important to know about this early on in your journey to help you keep well in the future.



What works for you?

Take a moment and ask yourself, ‘what is going to work for me and my body?’



Don‘t beat yourself up

Uncontrollable hunger and weight gain isn’t easy to deal with. Re-frame negative talk because change is possible.

Get more active

me kori tonu

- Increasing your physical activity is good for your physical health (tinana) and your mental health (hinengaro).
- By getting moving, you will help look after your heart, your muscles, and your joints.



Health check-up

Don’t put off health checks.



- If you are taking regular antipsychotic medications, speak to your keyworker, doctor, or GP about a cardiometabolic health check (heart health screen).
- Community support workers can help you get a physical health check-up at your GP.

This resource has been developed by people who have a lived experience of using antipsychotic medications.
Maximising Physical Health Improvement Group Waitematā

Tangata whaiora (person seeking wellness) Ideas from our journey

Managing cravings



Water/wai is now your best friend

Every time you have an urge to eat, try having a glass of water instead. Try drinking two glasses of water before your meals; this will help you feel full.

20-minute rule

If you still feel hungry after eating, wait 20 minutes before going back for more, and you will often feel full.

Distraction yourself

Distraction can work to reduce snacking. Have a walk, a shower, phone a friend, play a game, surf the net - find out something new.



Eating at night

We call this the ‘drug munchies’. This is a real problem and one you can manage by being prepared. Make snacks in advance, heat left-over dinner - avoid cooking while sedated! Try protein in your last meal of the day.

Craving sugar or carbs

This is normal on antipsychotic medications and can be a major cause of weight gain. Avoid sugary drinks, juices, and fizzy drinks; choose water instead. Try Stevia (a natural sweetener) instead of sugar in tea.

Being mindful

Take your time to prepare your food. Chew, savour and taste the food and enjoy your meal. This can help you slow down your eating and help you feel less hungry.



Who or what are your supports?

- Support and connection (whanaungatanga) are really important when making change.
- Your supports could include your keyworker, GP, friends, and whānau.
- Connecting with people who have similar experiences can be helpful. This is called Peer Support; ask your keyworker to connect you with Peer Support.
- Some GPs have FREE health coaches who support people with physical health goals.
- It’s also normal to not want to reach out to others. Know that you can still make changes to improve your physical health by getting informed.