Managing weight gain on antipsychotic medication

The lowdown

To enjoy life and live well, physical and mental health is important.

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.

Naming and tackling these negative feelings is a good place to start.

We find listening to music helps us change our negative mindset. What works to change yours?



Self-discipline and positive self-talk are necessary

Change is possible;
start by telling yourself
'I am worth it, I can do this'.
Even reading this is a start.
Pay attention to small wins!



Exercise around your medication

Exercise when you have some motivation and energy. You will know what times of the day are best for you.

Heart health

Look after your heart health. It's really important to do at least 20 minutes of (heartbeat-rising) activity regularly.

Waiting for motivation?

It won't come; it's best to just start.

Partner up!

Getting active with others is generally easier.

Activity helps with other side effects too

Like muscle spasms and restlessness.

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

Lived experience thoughts on sugars

Antipsychotics can increase sugar cravings. Excess sugar turns to fat, and unburnt carbs turn to fat. It's important that you are aware of this.



Check out food labels

- 4 grams of sugar is equal to one teaspoon of sugar.
- Sugar-free and zero-sugar alternatives are good options.

Nutritional needs are individual and specific; please seek professional advice from your healthcare provider.



Bread limit

It's easy to fill up on bread when you are hungry. Set yourself a limit of bread slices a day.

Anticipate big feeds

Plan for how to manage family and whānau occasions where there will be big feeds.





Watch out for the portion sizes

Decide on a portion size and wait 20 minutes before going back for more. Remember, go for variety and different colours.

Add protein to your diet

This keeps you feeling full. Try to reduce carbs.

Let those around you know

This will help them support the changes you are making.

Reduce temptation

If you don't buy it, you won't eat it.

Health checks

Don't put off health checks.

If you are taking regular antipsychotic medications, speak to your keyworker, doctor, or GP about having a cardiometabolic health check (heart health screen).



To get active check out:

- Citizen Advice Bureau will help you find activities in your community.
- Organised Sport Groups.
- Speak to your keyworker about getting referred to a community or peer support worker to help get active.
- Look on social media or local community boards for community groups or clubs you can join.