

How does weight gain from antipsychotic medications affect patients?

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Rapid weight gain is common when individuals take antipsychotic medications. A study published in *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* explored patients' experiences of weight

change and preferences for managing weight.

In interviews with 10 individuals taking [antipsychotic medications](#), patients described that initially the extent and speed of weight gain was overshadowed by psychotic experiences and their treatment. This led to an eventual shocking realization of weight gain, which contributed to loss of self-worth, agency, and hope. Weight gain amplified a sense of vulnerability, which contributed to social withdrawal, depression, and for some, psychotic experiences.

Investigators noted that understanding the psychological journey associated with [weight gain](#) in patients taking antipsychotic medications may offer potential novel targets for weight loss treatments.

"Excess weight has a major impact on physical and psychological wellbeing. In this study, people with psychosis explained how it not only knocks confidence and mood, but also contributes to paranoid fears and hearing critical voices," said lead author Felicity Waite, DCLinPsy, of the University of Oxford. "We now need to develop effective interventions. This study identifies new targets for treatment—rebuilding [confidence](#) may be a necessary first step in tackling excess weight."

More information: Felicity Waite et al, The psychological journey of weight gain in psychosis, *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* (2022). [DOI: 10.1111/papt.12386](https://doi.org/10.1111/papt.12386)

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