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BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

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How are treatments for weight gain related to bipolar disorder?

Being overweight is common in people with a serious mental illness, the cause of which may be attributable to lifestyle factors such as poor diet and physical inactivity, and also due to medication side effects. Weight gain is a well-documented side effect of many antipsychotic medications, particularly the newer second-generation medications. This could in part be a result of the wide mode of action of antipsychotic drugs, including disruption of metabolic pathways.

Excessive weight gain is a serious health concern, it is associated not only with reduced quality of life and social stigma, but can affect treatment adherence and increase morbidity (both physical and psychological) and mortality. Obesity is reported to double the risk of all-cause mortality, as well as related diseases such as coronary heart disease, stroke and type-2 diabetes.

Pharmacological strategies are at best only moderately effective for weight management, thus the ideal non-pharmacological strategies for weight management should combine diet, exercise and psychological/behavioural components. Weight management is important to ensure that the benefits of medications are not outweighed by the increased risk of physical disease.

What is the evidence for treatments for weight gain?

Moderate to high quality evidence suggests lifestyle interventions are effective for weight reduction in people with any severe mental illness. Moderate to low quality evidence suggests lifestyle interventions also reduce body mass and may improve depressive mood.

For more information see the technical table



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NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.

Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.

Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.

While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about bipolar disorder or its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

We are able to make significant advances due to the generosity of countless people. Your donation allows us to continue to work towards transforming lives. For information on how you can support our research, phone **1300 888 019** or make a secure donation at neura.edu.au.