

Many people who take antidepressants are faced with unwanted weight gain. The reasons vary. Studies show that multiple factors are involved. These include:

- An increase in appetite
- An increased desire for high-calorie foods
- A greater enjoyment of food due to improved mood
- A slowing of the body's metabolism

Follow these tips to help manage your weight while taking an antidepressant:

**Have you gained weight on your current antidepressant? *Don't stop your medicine!* Talk with your doctor about switching to a different one.** There are many available. Depending on your symptoms, another one might work as well without causing weight gain. Side effects vary from person to person. Work closely with your doctor to decide what is best for you.

**Some antidepressants increase stomach acid.** Many people overeat to ease this discomfort. Instead, try drinking a glass of water, herbal tea, or other low-cal, non-carbonated drink. An over-the-counter antacid might also help. Talk with your doctor if this is an ongoing problem.

**Be active every day.** Regular physical activity helps control weight. It can also offset the metabolic slowdown that some antidepressants cause. Being active adds to your sense of well-being too, which may help ease your depression. Choose activities you like. Examples are walking, biking, or gardening. Slowly build up to 30 minutes or more per day. Keep in mind that even small amounts of activity are better than nothing!

**Choose nutrient-rich foods most of the time.** A healthy diet will help you feel better emotionally, mentally, and physically. Include whole grains; fruits; vegetables; lean meats and meat substitutes, such as dried beans and peas, tofu, egg whites, fish, chicken, turkey, and lean cuts of beef, pork, and lamb; nonfat or 1% milk, yogurt, and cheese; and oils, nuts, and seeds.

**Eat reasonable portions.** In general, eating more calories than you burn by being active will cause weight gain. This is true if the calories are from nutrient-rich foods or not. So, choose reasonable portions. See the USDA Food Guide Pyramid at [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) for details.

**Keep your eating structured.** Aim for three meals and up to two snacks daily. This can help you build a pattern of healthy eating. Also try keeping a food log. Studies show that writing down what and how much you eat is the single best thing you can do to improve your eating habits.



**A healthier life is on the line for you!**

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**Limit sweets, sugary drinks, and high-fat snacks and desserts.** These foods are tasty but low in nutrients and high in calories. It is also tempting to eat too much of them! One way to maintain control but not deprive yourself of your favorite treats is to buy them in single-serving packages or 100-calorie packs. Allow yourself one small serving of one treat per day. This will help you feel satisfied without overdoing it.

**Make a long list of things you like to do that don't involve food.** Examples are hobbies, listening to music, and talking with friends. Include ways to be active too. Do something on this list, instead of eating food, when you're feeling blue. Reserve eating for when you are hungry.

**Keep in mind that treating your depression is the priority.** If you do all you can to prevent weight gain and don't succeed, take heart. Weight gain usually occurs within the first six months of taking a new antidepressant. Then it levels off. Aim to at least maintain your weight at that level, and consider this a success for the time being. As your mood improves, renew your weight loss efforts. Feeling better often makes it easier to manage lifestyle changes. Stick with it, and you will be well on your way to losing those extra pounds.

### Take Action

Choose one or two of the tips above that you are willing to try this week. Record them below.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_



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