

Being Overweight Can Lead To Weighty Health Issues—Are You At Risk?



Weight gain results from physical inactivity and poor dietary habits, but also may be caused by certain medications.

(NAPSA)—An estimated 97 million Americans—over 50 percent of the nation's adult population—are overweight, meaning they are at least 20 percent above their recommended body weight.

And while physical inactivity and poor dietary habits are most frequently associated with gaining weight, there are other causes. These include genetics, poor metabolism, certain medical conditions, and even some medications.

For example, some of the medications that make it possible for patients with mental illness to lead normal or near-normal lives can cause them to gain weight, which, in turn, may lead to increased health risks. This is particularly problematic for patients with schizophrenia, 40 percent of whom are overweight compared with 27 percent of the general population. Additionally, patients with schizophrenia who develop medical conditions typically have diminished access to adequate medical care.

The amount of weight a patient may gain varies from drug to drug. However, recent studies show that some of the most widely prescribed antipsychotic medications for treating schizophrenia can cause weight gains of nearly 15 to 25 pounds within the first year of treatment.

Weight gain can lead to serious health problems. A wide variety of medical conditions, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, hypertension or high blood pressure, gall bladder disease, breast cancer, endometrial cancer and

osteoarthritis are associated with weight gain. In fact, results from one recent study show that:

- Women who gained 11 pounds or more during their adult years were twice as likely to develop type 2 diabetes compared with those who maintained their weight.

- Women who gained up to 40 pounds or more were 12 times more likely to develop diabetes than women who did not.

- Women who gained more than 40 pounds increased their risk of heart disease by 165 percent.

- Women who gained up to 10 pounds over two years were 38 percent more likely to develop hypertension than those who maintained their weight.

In addition, weight gain impairs physical functioning, reduces quality of life, and is associated with a diminished sense of well-being.

To patients treated for schizophrenia, weight gain can be so burdensome that many—50 percent according to one study—stop taking their medication. Stopping medication can increase a patient's risk for relapse and subsequent hospitalization.

Following a healthy diet and engaging in regular exercise may play an important role in keeping weight gain at bay. If you or a family member think your weight gain may be a result of a medication you're taking, it is important to talk to your doctor.

To learn more about the effects of weight gain on your overall health, you should visit www.weightrisks.com.