

“Rambling On with Kathleen”

Medications and Weight Changes

It seems that everyone is concerned about weight these days. Obesity is at an all time high among all ages. Fast food is now a way of life for most of us. Of course, our lifestyles continue to become more sedentary with most people preferring a night working on the computer, watching television, or at the play-station instead of outside walking or at the gym. So, add a medicine on top of this that causes weight changes and someone who is already overweight AND depressed may have more problems.

Weight gain is probably one of the main concerns for people that take medications. In my experience, it is also probably one of the main reasons people stop the medication regime ordered by the physician.

It is not unusual for people diagnosed with depression to have changes in eating habits or weight changes. This can be loss or gain. When medications are prescribed and added this should be taken into consideration. For some, weight gain may be a blessing if the depression was preventing them from eating and suddenly with medications their depression is relieved, appetite increased and with the medication side effect a few additional pounds are added. However for most of us, weight gain would not be a welcomed side effect and we would need to discuss the pros and cons of our current medication regime with our physician.

Knowing this is a major concern, pharmaceutical companies seem to be addressing this issue in studies and more information is becoming available, as are more medications that are not affecting weight. It is thought that the meds that cause weight gain do so because of causing appetite increases, or changes in the metabolic pathways, or aiding the patient to “feel better” thus, they eat more.

Weight gain can be caused by a number of medications. The below is just a brief list but it is not all inclusive and certainly there are some medications in these groups that do not seem to effect weight at all.

Medications that do seem to cause some weight gain/changes:

- SSRI's
- Tricyclic Antidepressants
- Other Antidepressants
- Antipsychotics
- Mood Stabilizers and Anticonvulsants

Although these medications have been known to cause some weight gain, it is important for us to remember medications affect each person differently. Some meds may only cause weight gain in long term use. Some individuals taking these medications may not experience weight gain at all because it only occurs in a certain percentage of individuals studied. Some people that do gain weight may only gain one to two lbs a month and others may gain more weight and / or more rapidly. These inconsistencies make it more confusing for a person to determine the cause of the weight issues. Thus, this is even more of a reason to discuss weight concerns openly with your health care provider and / or physician.

If weight gain changes are a problem for you:

- Talk with your doctor immediately about this concern to investigate other options
- **DO NOT STOP TAKING THE MEDICATION** - Continuing taking your medication as ordered until you speak with the Doctor and until changes are made
- Log your weight prior to starting a new medication and then monthly or least at each doctor visit
- Start eating only when you are hungry and avoid those snacking times
- Stop eating when you feel full – eat one serving then wait before you refill your plate!
- Replace a soda or drinks with high fructose corn syrup with a glass of spring water
- Discuss an exercise routine with your physician and then **DO IT!**
- Be more alert to your food choices and avoid foods that are empty calories
- Read the labels
- Discuss nutrition and eating habits with your physician and consider asking him to order a consultation with a dietician or nutritionist in your area

Whether or not weight gain from the medications is an issue for you, exercise and nutrition play a role in wellness and weight management. Choosing a medication that does not interfere with your weight and health is also a priority to assist in your overall wellness. Discussions with your physician about weight concerns are extremely important. You and your physician can work together to find the best medication to meet your needs.

Resources:

Personal and Professional Experience

Internet

Psychology Today – Fat Pharms: RX for Weight Gain

Dealing with Weight Changes – BMS

Net Nutritionists-Nutrition Articles –

The Relationship between Weight Gain and Medications for Depression

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