

Weighing In August 2016 Newsletter

Weight Gain with Medication. It Does Happen!

This month has been one with multiple questions about weight gain. One lady came in and said, "How can I be gaining weight? I'm eating smarter and I'm walking more. What am I doing wrong?" What she failed to mention was that her physician had changed some of her medicines which caused her weight loss to slow down. So we will review what medications might be causing your weight gain.

Certain prescription drugs such as those used to treat high blood pressure, mood disorders, seizures, migraines and diabetes can cause weight gain-- up to several pounds a month. In many cases, we will be able to switch you to other medications to help your condition with clearance from your physician. By doing so, we can help with your weight loss. However, sometimes it's impossible to change medications, and we will just have to work around that.

Some drugs you take stimulate your appetite, and as a result, you eat more. Other drugs affect the way your body absorbs or stores glucose, which can lead to fat deposits around your midsection. Some even cause calories to be burned at a slower rate causing your body's metabolism to slow down. And then again others can cause shortness of breath and fatigue, making it difficult for people to exercise. Finally, other drugs can cause you to retain water, which adds to weight but not necessarily fat.

Drugs that trigger increases in appetite may work on your brain to affect the satiety area. It's often difficult to distinguish between weight gain from a drug and weight gain from other causes. Have you changed your diet or your amount of exercise? Because many things can slow the weight-loss process, you have to be open and honest with us to let us know.

Weight gain can increase your chances of high cholesterol, hypertension, and type II diabetes. If rapid weight gain occurs in a short period, you need to be concerned. You should never stop taking medications, but rather you need to discuss the problem right away with your prescribing physician.

Let's review some of the drugs that cause you to gain weight. Both the older and newer antidepressants are notorious for increasing appetite and causing weight gain. Some of these are used to treat migraine headaches. Tricyclic antidepressants such as Elavil and Pamelor (Nortriptyline) affect the neurotransmitters of the brain and exhibit antihistamine activity which boosts your appetite. However, the newer class of antidepressants called SSRIs is usually associated with weight gain such as Paxil, Zoloft and Prozac. Effexor and Cymbalta are not a cause of weight gain nor is Wellbutrin. In fact, Wellbutrin has been shown even to help people lose weight.

Other weight-gain culprits are Zyrtec and Allegra. These are selective antagonists of histamine one receptors. These drugs, which are available without prescription, have been associated with weight gain-- as much as 20 pounds. They also affect insulin levels.

Antipsychotic drugs such as Zyprexa, Risperdal, and Clozapine are all associated with weight gain. These drugs have an antihistamine activity that block serotonin which may contribute to the mechanism of weight gain. Recent research has shown that the enzymatic action of AMP-kinase is elevated in patients' brains that use antipsychotics. AMP-kinase can block the brain's histamine one receptor, which will boost appetite and will lead to weight gain. Other antipsychotics may impair glucose control and lead to insulin resistance, impaired glucose tolerance, and type II diabetes. A fasting blood sugar should be checked before the beginning of antipsychotic treatments and periodically after that.

Continued on page 2....

Of the antihypertensive drugs that people take for blood pressure control, beta blockers are known for weight gain. Typical examples of these drugs are Lopressor and Tenormin. Many of the older beta blocker drugs lead to fatigue which can cause weight gain in patients by slowing them down, thus affecting the number of calories burned each day.

Oral corticosteroids can cause the risk of weight gain with high doses and long-term use. Oral corticosteroids are used for asthma and painful joint inflammation and arthritis. Local injected corticosteroids, such as might be needed for joint replacement or spinal column inflammatory response, or inhaled corticosteroids that are used for asthma, are often not associated with weight gain, but again everybody's different.

Diabetic medicines for type II diabetics such as Diabeta and Glucotrol are members of the sulfonylurea class. These drugs often lead to weight gain which in turn makes patients' blood sugars worse which then causes them to seek out carbohydrates.

Seizure and mood-stabilizing drugs such as Depakote (valproic acid) are used to treat epilepsy and bipolar disorders. Valproic acid is also used for migraine prevention, yet it appears to boost the appetite and may result in a 10 to 20 pound weight gain. Lithium is another mood stabilizing drug which is associated with weight gain.

So if you're concerned about the weight you might be gaining because of medications, please consult your doctor to see if they are the cause. If so, find out if he or she is willing to change these medications. Our hope is that as you lose your weight, many of these medicines can be stopped. One of the greatest joys we have is seeing patients come off medications due to weight loss. So don't be discouraged about weight gain from medications. There are always answers to the problem, and we are here to help you in any way we can.

I leave you with one of my favorite verses, Philippians 4:6: Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication and with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Blessings,

Chuck Shaffer MD

Cauliflower "potato" salad

Makes 8 servings with about a half an ounce of protein and 1 vegetable serving per portion.

Ingredients:

- 1 whole cauliflower, steamed and florets chopped into chunks
- 6 slices turkey bacon or 6 slices smoked bacon, cooked crisp and crumbled
- 4 -5 scallions, chopped
- 1/2 cup finely diced celery
- 4 hardboiled egg, peeled and chopped
- 1/3 cup regular mayonnaise (olive oil based is a good choice)
- 3 tbsp heavy whipping cream
- 1 tablespoon Creole mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika

Instructions: Mix and chill.

Alcohol and Ketosis

Summer is known as vacation season! It seems that every week we have patients tell us that they need two weeks of supplements because they are traveling to the beach, Aruba or even Scotland! More often than not questions about alcohol also come up during these conversations.

If you are following a ketogenic diet while on vacation it's helpful to understand how alcohol affects your body. Many people think that a low carb beer will keep them in the clear; unfortunately there are many low carb beers that still have significant amounts of carbs in them (anywhere from 7-20 grams of carbohydrate per serving). After just a few glasses you are out of ketosis!

Following a low carb lifestyle requires a lot of ingredient reading. Unfortunately, these days we can't always trust what the advertising states on the label and this includes alcohol! Remember that just because it says low carb doesn't mean it is! In addition, all wine and beer are going to have some carbohydrate in them so if you can avoid them altogether you are off to a great start!

Choosing liquor instead of beer and wine is a better choice if you are looking to limit your carbs and stay in ketosis. Hard liquor is made from natural sugars, grains, potatoes, and fruit, the fermentation and distillation process that sugar is converted into ethyl alcohol.

So why do we not recommend alcohol if you can pretty much keep the carbs at bay? We know that your ultimate goal is to lose weight. While you can drink liquor and stay in ketosis, alcohol will be burned by the body first instead of other nutrients (fats and protein) consumed. In other words, alcohol will slow down the fat loss process because a smaller amount of the free fatty acids will be converted into ketones.

Another thing to consider if you decide to have a drink is that your tolerance is going to be different while in ketosis. Be aware that many people become intoxicated faster than usual when in ketosis. The ramifications can also be harsher, a number of people have reported that they experience worse hangovers while on a ketogenic diet. Hydration is a must and although we are not recommending alcohol, the typical advice is to drink 1 glass of water per 1 shot of alcohol you drink.

Lastly, alcohol should always be consumed in moderation with food. For those following a ketogenic diet, there is a condition called alcohol ketoacidosis which can be quite dangerous. It can happen if someone is drinking heavily within a short period of time and they have not eaten any food for a while. This can lead to dangerous levels of ketones in the blood, which can be life threatening.

We are not condoning alcohol, but at the same time, we understand that there are certain events in life that you just want to celebrate. Our hope is that having a better understanding of how alcohol affects your body during ketosis will guide you to make the best decision!

-Tricia Foley, MS, RD