

Study finds how common antidepressant medications cause weight gain

A recent study found that some antidepressants can cause more weight gain than others. This insight could help patients and clinicians make more informed decisions on antidepressant choices.



Researchers compared weight changes at 6, 12, and 24 months after starting eight common antidepressants.

A recent study comparing weight gain under eight different first-line antidepressants reveals that bupropion users are 15-20% less likely to experience significant weight gain compared to users of sertraline, the most commonly prescribed antidepressant.

Antidepressants are among the most commonly prescribed medications in the US, with 14% of adults using them.

However, weight gain is a frequent side effect that can affect long-term health and lead some patients to discontinue their treatment, resulting in poor health outcomes.

While antidepressants generally cause weight gain, the extent can vary between different medications.

Researchers from the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Institute led a study to determine which common antidepressants are associated with the most and least weight gain.

"Patients and their clinicians often have several options when starting an antidepressant for the first time. This study provides important real-world evidence regarding the amount of weight gain that should be expected after starting some of the most common antidepressants," said lead author

Joshua Petimar, assistant professor of population medicine at the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Institute.

The study, [published in the Annals of Internal Medicine](#), used electronic health records from eight health systems in the US, involving data from 1,83,118 adults aged 18-80 who were new users of antidepressants.

While randomised control trials are the gold standard for comparing medication effects, they are expensive and time-consuming. Instead, the researchers emulated a randomised trial by designing an ideal trial and matching the data to it as closely as possible.

Researchers compared weight changes at 6, 12, and 24 months after starting eight common antidepressants: sertraline, citalopram, escitalopram, fluoxetine, paroxetine, bupropion, duloxetine, and venlafaxine.

Results showed that bupropion users gained the least weight compared to users of other antidepressants. Bupropion users were about 15-20% less likely to gain a clinically significant amount of weight than those taking sertraline.

Clinically significant weight gain was defined as a 5% or more increase in body weight.

The study also found that many patients were taking medications that led to more weight gain than alternatives available in the same class.

For instance, among selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), escitalopram and paroxetine were associated with a higher risk of significant weight gain than sertraline in the first six months.

"Although there are several reasons why patients and their clinicians might choose one antidepressant over another, weight gain is an important side effect that often leads to patients stopping their medication," said senior author Jason Block, a general internal medicine physician and associate professor of population medicine at the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Institute.

News Source:

<https://www.indiatoday.in/health/story/study-finds-how-common-antidepressant-medications-cause-weight-gain-2564294-2024-07-09>