

# 10 REASONS YOU MIGHT BE GAINING WEIGHT

Your clothes are fitting tighter, especially around your waist. You step on the scale and see that you've gained some weight. You don't think you've been eating very much more. And you wonder, "Why am I gaining weight?" Here's a Top 10 list of possible reasons.

By Joy Pape, RN, BSN, CDE, WOCN



## 1 FOOD

You may be eating more than you think. For the most part, people gain weight because they are taking in more calories than they are "spending" in physical activity. If you really want to see what you are eating, keep a food diary. A recent study published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* showed people who wrote down everything they ate and drank, six days a week lost about twice as much weight as those who kept a diary one day a week or less. You don't need anything fancy; you can write it down with a pencil and paper or on your computer. Just make sure you are honest about everything you eat and drink, including how much.

## 2 MEDICINES

Are you taking a medicine that causes weight gain? Some medicines that can cause you to gain weight are antidepressants, antipsychotics, antiseizure drugs, high blood pressure medicine, diabetes medicine, heart-burn medicine and steroids. If you have noticed a weight gain since starting any of these medicines, talk with your health care provider to see if there is another choice. Don't stop any medicine or make dose changes without first talking with your health care provider.

## 3 THE SCALE

Do you weigh yourself often? It's easy to put on those pounds without knowing it. Preventing weight gain is as important as weight loss. The National Weight Control Registry (NWCR) is made up of more than 5,000 members who have lost an average of 66 pounds and kept it off for 5.5 years. Seventy-five percent of people who belong to the NWCR report they weigh themselves at least once a week. Weigh yourself at least one time a week at the same time of day. The best time to weigh yourself is when you wake up in the morning, after you go to the bathroom, with no clothes on, using the same scale.

## 4 STRESS

Are you experiencing a lot of stress? When you are stressed, your body releases stress hormones to try to help you cope. But these hormones can increase your weight, as well as your blood glucose, blood pressure, cholesterol, waist size and more. Some people eat more when they are stressed—sometimes without even knowing they're doing it. Identify your sources of stress, and look into ways to handle stress, such as learning to say "no," taking a daily walk, reading a spiritual book or just taking more time for yourself.

## 5 LOW BLOOD GLUCOSE (HYPOGLYCEMIA)

When your blood glucose is low, the way to treat it is with food. We know that the treatment for a low blood glucose is 15 grams of carbohydrates. But when your blood glucose is low and you're hungry, you may not be thinking clearly, which can make it easy to overeat. And, if you often have low blood glucose, the calories will add up. If you are having low blood glucose levels more than two times a week, talk with your health care provider to find out why this is happening and what you can do to prevent it.

## 6 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

You may be moving less than you think. With all the new gadgets, you don't need to be as active to get things done. With a flip of your wrist, you can click on your computer or make a telephone call and your shopping is done. You can sit at the computer, on the telephone, or in front of a television for hours. Wear a pedometer to track your steps. Once you see how many steps you get a day, set small, realistic goals to increase your activity gradually, day by day, or week by week.

## 7 SLEEP

Do you get enough sleep? Do you have a sleep disorder such as sleep apnea, or do you get up in the middle of the night to eat? Diabetes can affect your sleep, and poor sleep can not only affect your weight but also your diabetes care. Be more aware of your sleep habits, try to get between seven and nine hours of sleep per night. If you snore, ask your doctor to have you checked for sleep apnea.

## 8 OTHER MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Do you have a medical condition that keeps you from being active, or one that affects your metabolism? Do you have a sluggish thyroid gland? It's fairly common for people who have diabetes to have thyroid problems. Or you may be taking the right thyroid medication but not the right dose. Talk with your health care provider about having your thyroid checked, or ask if you are on the right dose of thyroid medicine.

## 9 GETTING OLDER

You may have changes in your hormones. If you are a man, you may have a low testosterone level. If you are a woman, you may have a low estrogen level. These hormones and the lack of them affect your diabetes as well as your weight. Ask your health care provider if your testosterone or estrogen level is low. He or she can use the results of a blood test to determine a proper course of treatment.

## 10 INSULIN RESISTANCE

Insulin resistance is a condition in which your body makes insulin but does not use it properly, and this can lead to weight gain. It may take your body more insulin—either the insulin you take or the insulin your body makes—to keep your blood glucose at your target level. Insulin helps your body use food more efficiently and can cause weight gain. Work with your health care provider to see if you need to readjust your medicines.