

Antipsychotic drug use in children for mood, behavior disorders increases type 2 diabetes risk

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Prescribing of "atypical" antipsychotic medications to children and young adults with behavioral problems or mood disorders may put them at unnecessary risk for type 2 diabetes, a Vanderbilt University Medical Center study shows.

Young people using medications like [risperidone](#), [quetiapine](#), aripiprazol and [olanzapine](#) led to a threefold increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes within the first year of taking the drug, according to the study published Aug. 21 in the journal *JAMA Psychiatry*.

While other studies have shown an increased risk for type 2 diabetes associated with the use atypical antipsychotic medications, this is the first large, well-designed study to look at the risk in children, said Wayne A. Ray, Ph.D., professor of Preventive Medicine, and senior author of the study. The authors note the use of these drugs for non-psychosis-related mood, attention or behavioral disorders in youth/children now accounts for the majority of prescriptions.

"Because we wanted to address this question of risk for indications for which there were therapeutic alternatives, we deliberately excluded those taking antipsychotics for schizophrenia and other [psychoses](#); thus, our entire sample consisted of patients for whom there were alternatives to antipsychotics," Ray said.

State-provided, de-identified medical records were examined for TennCare youths ages 6-24 from 1996 through 2007. During that time children and youth who were prescribed treatment with [atypical antipsychotics](#) for attention, behavioral or [mood disorders](#), were compared with similar youth prescribed approved medications for those disorders. Even with the further elimination of certain disorders that are commonly associated with diabetes, like polycystic ovarian syndrome, those taking antipsychotics had triple the risk of developing type 2 diabetes in the following year, with the risk increasing further as cumulative dosages increased. The increased risk persisted for at least a year after the medications were stopped.

Ray and his colleagues point out developing type 2 diabetes is still rare in this age group. Of the nearly 29,000 children and youth in the antipsychotic medication group and 14,400 children in the control group, 106 were ultimately diagnosed and treated for type 2 diabetes.

"That's why this study had to be so large, in order to detect clinically meaningful differences in the risk of [type 2 diabetes](#), a relatively uncommon, but serious condition for children and youth," Ray said.

The take-away message for providers, said Ray, is to carefully examine alternatives to antipsychotic use.

"This is particularly important for high-risk children, for example, those with elevated weight. Children should be monitored carefully for metabolic effects predisposing them to diabetes, and use of the drug should be at the lowest possible dose for the shortest possible time," he said.

Provided by Vanderbilt University Medical Center

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