

# Link between antidepressants and diabetes risk is real

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Clinicians should be extra vigilant when prescribing antidepressants as they could pose a risk of type 2 diabetes, researchers at the University of Southampton have warned.

A systematic review, carried out by the University, showed that people taking [antidepressants](#) are at a higher risk of type 2 diabetes; however it is not certain whether the medication is responsible.

The use of antidepressant medication has risen sharply over recent years reaching 46.7 million [prescriptions](#) issued in the UK in 2011.

A number of studies have been carried out to establish whether antidepressants are linked with diabetes but results have varied depending on the methods used, type of medication and the number of participants.

University of Southampton researchers assessed 22 studies and three previous systematic reviews that looked into the effects of antidepressants on [diabetes risk](#). Overall, people taking antidepressants were more likely to have diabetes. However, the researchers warned that different types of antidepressants may carry different risks and long-term prospective randomized control trials are needed to look at the effects of individual tablets.

Published in *Diabetes Care*, the team said that there are "several plausible" reasons why antidepressants are associated with an increased

risk of diabetes. For example, several antidepressants are associated with significant weight gain which increases the risk of type 2 diabetes. However, they also say that several studies which explored this association still observed an increased risk of diabetes after adjustment for changes in body weight, implying other factors could be involved.

Dr Katharine Barnard, Health Psychologist from the University of Southampton comments: "Antidepressants are used widely in the UK, with a significant increase in their use recently. Our research shows that when you take away all the [classic risk](#) factors of [type 2 diabetes](#); [weight gain](#), lifestyle etc, there is something about antidepressants that appears to be an independent risk factor. With 46 million prescriptions a year, this potential increased risk is worrying. Heightened alertness to the possibility of diabetes in people taking antidepressants is necessary until further research is conducted."

Richard Holt, Professor in Diabetes and Endocrinology at the University of Southampton, adds: "While depression is an important clinical problem and antidepressants are effective treatments for this debilitating condition, clinicians need to be aware of the potential risk of diabetes, particularly when using antidepressants in higher doses or for longer duration. When prescribing antidepressants, doctors should be aware of this risk and take steps to monitor for diabetes and reduce that risk of diabetes through lifestyle modification."

**More information:** Antidepressant Medication as a Risk Factor for Type 2 Diabetes and Impaired Glucose Regulation: Systematic Review, *Diabetes Care*, 2013.

Provided by University of Southampton

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