

Medications That May Increase Your Risk for Diabetes

Medications you take for different health conditions may affect your body's ability to manage insulin or blood sugar. While you take these drugs for serious health problems, they could also aggravate or trigger diabetes. If you use any of the following drugs, talk with your doctor about the risks and benefits. Ask whether other options exist for you. This is especially the case if you already have diabetes or you are at risk for it.

Steroids such as prednisone are associated with high risk of developing diabetes when taken long-term. Because these steroids are effective in treating symptoms of inflammation, you will want to discuss the pros and cons of taking them with your doctor. Anabolic steroids (the kind people take to build muscle) have unwanted side effects, but usually are not associated with diabetes.

Statins are used to treat high cholesterol, which is an excess of fat in the blood. Recent studies suggest that statins taken in high doses can lead to diabetes. However, statins also reduce your chances of heart attack and other cardiac problems. The risks and benefits of statins should be discussed with your doctor. Another medicine for high cholesterol called nicotinic acid can cause diabetes secondary to insulin resistance (which happens when the body can't use its insulin properly).

Thiazides diuretics or "water pills" are used to treat high blood pressure (or hypertension). Studies show that thiazides can increase the risk of developing diabetes. However, they can also reduce heart problems. Some studies show that the risk of diabetes is lower when thiazides are taken in low doses.

Beta-blockers are used to treat high blood pressure, glaucoma, and heart conditions. Several studies have linked prolonged use of beta-blockers to increased risk of diabetes. Use of certain "nonselective" beta-blockers may reduce this risk. Discuss the pros and cons of taking beta blockers with your doctor.

Certain newer "**second generation**" **antipsychotic medications** are associated with an increased risk for diabetes. Those discussed most often are clozapine, olanzapine, and risperidone. More research is needed on the effects of these and other antipsychotic medications. Anyone taking them should be carefully monitored. People (especially those already at risk for diabetes) should discuss alternative options with their doctors and other supporters.

Protease inhibitors like ritonavir are an important part of HIV antiretroviral therapy. They also lead some people to develop diabetes by increasing insulin resistance and affecting other cells in the body. Talk to your doctor about how to limit your diabetes risk while taking antiretroviral therapy for HIV.

Pentamidine, which is given by injection for the treatment of certain types of pneumonia, can lead to problems with blood sugar, leading to the need for insulin treatment.

If you use any of these medications, it's important to discuss their risks and benefits with your doctor. Please don't stop taking medications without talking to your health care provider, since this may be harmful to you. No matter what prescription, over-the-counter, or alternative medicines you may take, working on a healthy lifestyle is important for managing your diabetes.