New Study Indicates Potential Risk of Antipsychotic Drugs Leading to Diabetes in Children

November 23, 2011 By Rhonda Peters

A new study published in the Journal of American Academy of Pediatrics, reported that there is a potential link between second-generation antipsychotic (SGA) drugs and diabetes in children (source: Pediatrics online). The study was performed with children between the ages 5 - 18 who started SGA treatment between January 2001 and December 2008. Though the study was will need further analysis in the future for more conclusive data, it was indeed thought provoking. The following are questions that parents or legal guardians should know.

What are second-generation antipsychotic (SGA) drugs?
Second-generation antipsychotic drugs were developed in the past decade for the treatment of severe mental disorders such as schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, and mania. Over the years these SGAs have also been used to treat people with autism and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).Some examples of these drugs are as follows (source: Psychatlanta.com):

Abilify (aripiprazole), Clozaril (clozapine), Geodon (ziprasidone), Risperdal and Risperdal Consta (risperidone), Seroquel (quetiapine), Symbyax (Zyprexa [olanzapine] and Prozac [fluoxetine] combination), Zyprexa and Zyprexa Zydis (olanzapine)

How many children are prescribed SGAs?
SGAs used by children increased by 65 percent from 2002 to 2009 mainly from prescriptions written for teenagers. 15% of antipsychotic use in the United States among non-institutionalized (not committed to a hospital/institution) patients is in children and almost 25% of Medicaid

antipsychotic users are children. (source: Medscape Medical News)

What is the risk to children on SGAs and diabetes vs. those not using SGAs?
Children on antipsychotics had four times the risk of diabetes than those not taking any psychiatric medication, with a rate of about three cases per 1,000 children per year, compared to just under 0.8 cases per 1,000 among other children. (source: ThirdAge.com)

Why does SGAs lead to diabetes in children?
Currently it is still unknown why antipsychotic drugs lead to diabetes in children. However it has been said that they could trigger weight gain, but according to Dr. Jonathan Mink, Chief of Child Neurology at the University of Rochester Medical Center in New York, “it’s hard to argue that it’s just weight gain.” (source: Reuters Health)

Are there any special foods that could help children avoid this risk?
This study did not report on natural alternatives to using SGAs, however there have been other studies that have reported that children who suffer from autism or ADHD, are less likely to need SGAs if they eat a gluten-free, casein-free diet. That’s a diet that includes, no dairy or dairy based products or wheat products. Also, this same diet would be beneficial to children who may be diagnosed with diabetes.
