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## Schizophrenia drugs can increase the risk of diabetes

People with schizophrenia have a higher incidence of diabetes than the general population, and that risk is multiplied with some of the medicines used to treat schizophrenia, according to Professor Joseph Proietto, writing in this month's *Australian Prescriber*.

Professor Proietto of Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, Melbourne, says that although the link between taking antipsychotic drugs and developing diabetes is clear, the reasons for this are not fully understood.

The risk is higher with atypical drugs such as clozapine and olanzapine and the low potency conventional antipsychotics, than with the use of risperidone or high potency conventional drugs.

It is known that some atypical drugs cause weight gain, directly contributing to an elevated risk of diabetes. However, diabetes is known to develop in some patients who do not gain weight, suggesting that other mechanisms are involved.

It seems, by the high levels of insulin present in people taking antipsychotics, that some drugs are increasing insulin resistance.

Professor Proietto encourages health professionals to:

- Be alert to the increased risk of diabetes in patients with schizophrenia
- Monitor blood glucose more frequently in patients with diabetes who commence antipsychotic drugs
- Provide advice on healthy lifestyle options and be mindful that compliance may be difficult for patients with schizophrenia

For more information about therapeutics contact *Therapeutic Advice and Information Service (TAIS)* for health professionals on 1300 138 677, Monday to Friday, between 9am and 7pm EST for the cost of a local call. *TAIS* gives confidential information about prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, herbal and natural therapies and is provided by the NPS.

For the complete article visit the *Australian Prescriber* web site [www.australianprescriber.com](http://www.australianprescriber.com). *Australian Prescriber* is an independent review journal providing critical commentary on therapeutic topics for health professionals. It is published by National Prescribing Service (NPS), an independent, non-profit organisation funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. NPS works to improve the health of all Australians through Quality Use of Medicines.

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