Can Taking Statins Raise Your Risk of Type 2 Diabetes?

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Cholesterol-lowering drugs might have some serious unintended consequences for those prescribed statins to reduce their risk of heart disease. According to new findings published in the journal Diabetologia, statins could possibly raise the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, Time reports.

For the study, scientists in Finland followed 8,749 non-diabetic white men, ages 45 to 73, for an average of almost six years. Researchers found that the men who were prescribed statins to lower their cholesterol were 46 percent more likely to develop type 2 diabetes after six years compared with those who didn't take the drug.

Findings also showed that, after a period of time, statins also seemed to make these men more resistant to insulin, a hormone that controls blood sugar levels. What's more, researchers found that the longer these men took statins and the higher the dose they took, the greater their risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Robert Eckel, MD, PhD, professor of medicine at the University of Colorado and former president of the American Heart Association, called the findings a "good news-bad news scenario."

"Although there is convincing evidence that patients on statins are at an increased risk of new-onset diabetes," Eckel added, "the benefit accrued in reducing risks of heart attack, stroke and fatal heart disease trumps the effects of being new onset diabetics."

Most experts agreed with Eckel and stressed that the study isn't necessarily a catch-all warning against statins. They believe the findings simply showed another potential risk that needs to be considered when doctors evaluate approaches to treat heart disease in individual patients.

Other experts stressed that in addition to prescribing statins to treat heart disease, docs should also suggest lifestyle changes to help people manage their cholesterol levels.

Genetic variations in African Americans could help explain why more black people develop diabetes than white folks. Click here for more information.

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