



Insulin Dependent Diabetes Trust

Type 2 and You

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Welcome to the fifth issue of Type 2 and You. In this issue we look at various types and uses of artificial sweeteners. We also have some tips and advice for those who want to try and lose some weight. However, first we bring you news of the emerging scandal surrounding the Type 2 drug – Avandia.

The Avandia Scandal

There has been intense media coverage over the last few weeks of the scandal emerging around Avandia – a drug used to treat Type 2 diabetes, manufactured by drug giant GlaxoSmithKline (GSK).

Studies have shown that Avandia [also called rosiglitazone] causes an increased risk of stroke and heart failure. Manufacturer, GlaxoSmithKline [GSK], continue to defend the drug despite already paying out millions of dollars in settlements to patients or their relatives in the US. Several more studies, published this year, have again demonstrated that Avandia causes an increased risk of stroke and heart failure.

IDDT has tried to keep readers up to date with news about the safety

of Avandia but decisions have taken too long and patients have been put at risk.

Avandia has been prescribed for the last ten years but now it has emerged that GSK knew that there were cardiac risks associated with the drug but chose to downplay these risks, before it became public knowledge.

It has been reported that the UK drug regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Authority was advised by the Commission on Human Medicines to withdraw Avandia last July because its “risks outweigh its benefits.” However, it remains on the market because the European Medicines Agency, which licenses drugs across Europe, has yet to reach a decision.

This news is highly alarming and IDDT has already had contact with several people taking Avandia, who have been deeply worried and have wanted to change their medication. The advice IDDT is giving is not to stop taking your medication but to go to see your doctor to discuss alternative treatment options. It may also be worth bearing in mind that one option you may be offered is Actos (pioglitazone). This comes from the same family of drugs as Avandia and there are concerns about the safety of Actos as well.

Artificial Sweeteners

In this article we will take a look at artificial sweeteners, what they are, how they can be used and the effects that they may have on people with diabetes.

Artificial sweeteners are chemicals or natural compounds that offer the sweetness of sugar without as many calories. Because the substitutes are much sweeter than sugar, it takes a much smaller quantity to create the same sweetness. Products made with artificial sweeteners have a much lower calorie count than do those made with sugar.

People with diabetes may use artificial sweeteners because they make food taste sweet without raising blood sugar levels. But keep in mind that if you do have diabetes, some foods containing artificial sweeteners, such as sugar-free yogurt, can still affect your blood sugar level due to other carbohydrates or proteins in the food.

There are four commonly used types of artificial sweeteners:

Saccharin (brand name: Sweet ‘N’ Low, Sweetex) – this sweetener can be used in both hot and cold food and can also be used as a sugar substitute in cooking and baking. It is generally regarded as the safest artificial sweetener. However, it should not be used by women who are pregnant or breastfeeding and there is a possibility of allergic reactions including headaches, breathing difficulties, skin problems and stomach upsets.

Aspartame (brand name: Nutrasweet) – this sweetener can be used in cold and warm foods. It is not suitable for cooking or baking as it breaks down under high temperatures. It should not be used by people who have a rare genetic condition called phenylketonuria (PKU) and there have been reports of increased numbers and severity of allergic reactions, migraines and mood disorders, such as depression, especially among people who already have these conditions.

Sucralose (brand name: Splenda) - this sweetener can be used in both hot and cold food and can also be used as a sugar substitute in cooking and baking. It can also be found in processed foods.

Acesulfame K (brand name: Sweet One, Sunnett) - this sweetener can be used in both hot and cold food and can also be used as a sugar substitute in cooking and baking. It is commonly found in processed foods and canned drinks.

Labelling

Artificial sweeteners are often used in prepared foods and these can be labelled in a variety of ways - No sugar, low-sugar, naturally sweetened, no added sugar – and this can lead to confusion, so here

are the definitions of each of these terms:

- **No sugar** means the product does not contain sugar at all. It may contain sugar alcohols or artificial sweeteners.
- **No added sugar** means that during processing, no extra sugar was added. However, the original source might have contained sugar, such as fructose in fruit juice. Additional sweeteners, such as sugar alcohols or artificial sweeteners, might have been added.
- **Sugar free** means that the product contains no sugars. It may contain sugar alcohols or artificial sweeteners.
- **Dietetic** can mean a lot of things. It's likely that the product has reduced calories.
- **All natural** simply means that the product does not contain artificial ingredients. It may contain natural sweeteners, such as sugars or sugar alcohol.

A final cautionary note about sugar alcohol sweeteners, such as sorbitol, mannitol and xylitol. These types of sweeteners contain carbohydrates so they do affect blood sugar levels. They are often found in reduced calorie sweets and chewing gum. So if you are in doubt check the nutritional information label. Under the carbohydrate section, you can see how many carbohydrates the product contains. You can also see how much of these carbohydrates are in the form of sugar or sugar alcohol.

Losing Weight

One of the first things most people are advised to do when they are first diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes is to lose weight. There are several reasons for this:

- It increases the likelihood that your blood glucose levels will drop and you will need less medication as a result.
- It will reduce the likelihood that you will need to move on to insulin

therapy.

- It is likely your blood pressure will drop.
- It is likely your cholesterol levels will fall.

Dieting

In theory, losing weight is easy. If you eat fewer calories than you use up, then you will lose weight. You can do this either by eating less or exercising more – better still you can do both!

Unfortunately, in reality losing weight is not easy and keeping the weight off is harder still. People often find that losing weight is a slow and frustrating process and when they have lost some weight, old eating habits return and they start to regain weight. If you stop dieting when you reach your target weight, then you are likely to regain what you have lost.

There are several things you can do to help you lose weight and these involve some simple lifestyle changes. You can try and make these changes one at a time, at your own pace so that you can feel that you have mastered each change before moving on to the next.

The first thing you need to do is to eat fewer calories and take more exercise. Below are some tips as to how you can change your eating habits so that you can lose excess weight:

- Eat according to a schedule to avoid snacking and unscheduled eating.
- Eat more slowly to make the meal last.
- Try eating from a smaller plate – it makes it look as if you have more food.
- Try to cook tasty low-calorie foods that can be shared by the rest of the household – that way you won't feel so left out.
- Don't feel you have to clean your plate – stop eating when you have had enough.
- Set realistic targets for losing weight – don't set yourself up to fail by being over-ambitious.
- Allow yourself the occasional treat to avoid getting bored or

- frustrated with your diet.
- Be wary of the calories in things like salad dressing, alcohol and bread.
 - Make a shopping list before going to the supermarket and stick strictly to the list.
 - Never go shopping for food when you are hungry.

Exercise

Exercise is also key to losing weight. It burns up calories so, providing that you don't eat more it will help you lose weight. You should gradually build up your level of physical activity – a sudden increase in vigorous exercise can be dangerous. You should stop exercising if you get any pain or feel dizzy, sick or unwell. Also, if you have any type of heart condition then you should discuss with your doctor what type of exercise is suitable for you.

If you are taking insulin or one of the sulphonylureas, such as Glibenclamide, Diamicon, Gliclazide, Amaryl, Glimepiride, Glibenese, Glipizide, Minodiab, that can cause low blood sugar levels then there are some precautions you should take when exercising to avoid low blood sugar levels:

- Eat a meal of slow acting carbohydrates about an hour before taking exercise, such a porridge or multi-grain bread
- Eat a fast acting carbohydrate immediately after exercise, such as a piece of fruit, fruit juice or biscuits.
- Test your blood glucose levels regularly when exercising to avoid high or low blood sugar levels.

Don't give up easily. If you get in the habit of exercising several times a week for three months then you are likely to continue and be still taking exercise a year later. Exercise does not have to be highly energetic – just 30 minutes brisk walking each day counts as exercise. Exercising with a partner, friend or spouse is also likely to make it an enjoyable experience and mean you are more likely to continue.

IDDT Quarterly Publications

IDDT produce a wide range of **free** information leaflets, including information on Carbohydrates, Hypoglycaemia, Diet and Exercise and Exercise and your Heart. These can be sent by post or downloaded from our new website.

For more information contact us!

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