

Avandia and Risk of Heart Attack Information for Patients

If you or a loved one has diabetes and uses a medication called *Avandia* (rosiglitazone), you have probably heard about several new studies that question its safety.

Some of these studies suggest that *Avandia* increases the risk of heart attacks, but they don't prove it. Most experts recommended not jumping to conclusions based on the initial study. But now concern is increasing. Additional evidence is coming to light. It still does not prove there is a problem but it suggests that there might be.

We rely on a group of experts at *Prescriber's Letter* and *Pharmacist's Letter* to analyze these kinds of studies for us. They agree with the American Diabetes Association who now strongly encourages patients taking *Avandia* to consult their healthcare provider to reevaluate whether the benefit of the drug is worth the possible risks.

Below is some background information to help you.

What is Avandia?

Avandia (rosiglitazone) is a medicine used to treat people with type 2 diabetes. It helps the body use its own natural insulin better, which lowers blood sugar. *Avandia* can be used alone, or with other medicines to treat diabetes. Rosiglitazone, the drug in *Avandia*, is also in *Avandaryl* and *Avandamet*.

Does it really increase my chances of having a heart attack?

A new study hints that there might be an increased risk, but it certainly doesn't prove it. The FDA is gathering additional information to decide if it does.

Should I stop taking Avandia?

No, not without discussing it with your healthcare provider first. But the American Diabetes Association now strongly encourages patients taking *Avandia* to consult their healthcare provider to decide if the benefits of the drug outweigh the possible risks.

Are there other options for me?

Yes. There is a medicine that is similar to *Avandia* called *Actos* (pioglitazone). Plus there are many other diabetes medicines. Be sure to follow your diet and exercise instructions too.

What should I watch for if I'm taking Avandia?

Avandia and *Actos* both can worsen symptoms of heart failure. If you are taking either of these medicines and have swelling (fluid retention), breathing trouble, or sudden weight gain, contact your healthcare provider immediately. *Avandia* and *Actos* can very rarely cause other problems. If you are taking either of these medicines and have unexplained nausea and vomiting, stomach pain, tiredness, appetite loss, or if you notice that your skin or eyes look yellow, contact your healthcare provider. Also make sure your pharmacist and your prescriber know about any natural supplements, energy drinks, over-the-counter drugs, or any other remedies you may be taking. These can sometimes affect your blood sugar.

You are invited to discuss any of your medications or concerns with us.