

Study analyzes diabetes drug metformin as obesity treatment for children

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Treatment with the diabetes drug metformin appears to be associated with a modest reduction in body mass index (BMI) in obese children when combined with lifestyle interventions such as diet and exercise, according to a study by Marian S. McDonagh, Pharm. D., of the Oregon Health & Science University, and colleagues.

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Childhood obesity is a health problem in the United States, with nearly 17 percent of children being obese. Metformin is approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat type 2 diabetes in adults and children over 10 years old, but it has been used off-label in recent years to treat childhood obesity.

Researchers assessed the safety and effectiveness of metformin to treat obesity in children (ages 18 and younger) without a diagnosis of diabetes by reviewing results from 14 clinical trials. The trials included 946 children and adolescents, who ranged in age from 10 to 16 years, and had baseline BMIs from 26 to 41.

The results indicated that while metformin helped obese children reduce their BMI (a reduction of -1.38 from baseline) and weight compared with lifestyle interventions alone, the change was small compared to what is needed for long-term health benefits. Researchers noted no serious adverse events were reported.

"While our results indicate that some [obese children](#) and adolescents may benefit from short-term treatment with metformin combined with [lifestyle interventions](#), these benefits were very modest, not achieving a 5 percent reduction in BMI," the study concludes.

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