

Hypertension Canada Statement For Patients: Thiazides and Skin Cancer

April 20, 2021.

Concerns have recently been raised about the risk of skin cancer and some high blood pressure medications called “thiazides”. These medications include hydrochlorothiazide, chlorthalidone, and indapamide (they are also included in some combination products). Our experts have reviewed the paper by Dr. Drucker and colleagues which was published in the journal CMAJ on April 12, 2021.

In this study, they found a small increased risk of skin cancers in those receiving thiazide-type medications. In context, the risk of skin cancer (which varies with exposure, genetics and location) is low - we estimate that treatment of 9000-14,000 patients with a thiazide would lead to one extra case of skin cancer (melanoma). It is important to note that this kind of study cannot prove that thiazides cause skin cancer, it only shows an association.

By contrast, the risk of high blood pressure-related complications are very high (including stroke, heart attack, and kidney failure).

If you are concerned, we recommend that you speak with your physician or pharmacist. Do NOT stop taking your blood pressure medications.

We recommend much more important skin cancer prevention measures such as limiting sun exposure and use of sunscreen.

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