

# Statin Medicines

## What are statins used for?

Statins are a group of medicines used to lower cholesterol. Lowering your cholesterol can lower your risk of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. Diet and exercise can also lower cholesterol but sometimes not enough. Statins may be used alone or with other medicines, usually when changes in your diet and exercise have not lowered your cholesterol level.

Cholesterol is a type of fat. Your body makes some cholesterol and gets the rest from foods such as meats, dairy products, and eggs.

Cholesterol has both good and bad effects on the body. Your body uses cholesterol to make hormones and to build and maintain cells. When your body has too much cholesterol, the excess fat sticks to the inside of the blood vessel walls. This is called plaque. Plaque makes the blood vessel walls thicker and the area inside the vessels smaller. This means less blood can flow through the blood vessels. Also, pieces of plaque may break off and block blood flow, which can cause a heart attack or stroke.

In addition to your cholesterol level, your healthcare provider will consider other factors that may increase your risk of heart disease to help determine if you need a statin. For example, your risk is increased if you are overweight, have diabetes or high blood pressure, are a smoker, or don't get enough exercise.

There are several different statins. Which statin is best for you depends on your condition and health.

## How do they work?

Statins block the enzyme in your liver that is responsible for making cholesterol. Statins lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and triglycerides in the blood. They slightly increase the amount of HDL (good) cholesterol. Statins also help the liver remove LDL cholesterol from the blood.

## What else do I need to know about this medicine?

- Follow the directions that come with your medicine, including information about food or alcohol. Make sure you know how and when to take your medicine. Do not take more or less than you are supposed to take.
- Many medicines have side effects. A side effect is a symptom or problem that is caused by the medicine. Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist what side effects the medicine may cause and what you should do if you have side effects.
- Try to get all of your prescriptions filled at the same place. Your pharmacist can help make sure that all of your medicines are safe to take together.
- Keep a list of your medicines with you. List all of the prescription medicines, nonprescription medicines, supplements, natural remedies, and vitamins that

you take. Tell all healthcare providers who treat you about all of the products you are taking.

If you have any questions, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information. Be sure to keep all appointments for provider visits or tests.

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