

STATINS

SEATON & COLYTON MEDICAL PRACTICE

CHOLESTEROL & STATINS

Statins are medications that reduce the level of cholesterol in your blood.

Cholesterol is a fatty material which is mainly made in the liver. Some cholesterol is important for how our cells work and helps your body make hormones.

However, having too much cholesterol can lead to it building up on the walls of your arteries, causing them to narrow, which increases your risk of a heart attack, stroke or dementia.

Reducing your cholesterol level helps lower your risk of developing circulatory diseases such as angina, heart attack and stroke.

CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol is divided into 'good' (high-density lipoproteins) cholesterol and 'bad' (low-density lipoproteins) cholesterol. Too much 'bad' cholesterol is what can lead to fatty layers building up in your arteries, which blocks the flow of blood.

There are lots of causes of high cholesterol:

- an unhealthy diet
- excess alcohol
- smoking
- lack of physical activity
- diabetes
- kidney diseases
- age
- genetics & ethnicity

Some of the above factors can be tackled at home with a healthy lifestyle: stopping smoking, regular exercise, a healthier diet (reducing intake of processed foods, saturated fats, reducing salt intake, increasing fibre (wholegrains, fruits) and increasing pulses and seeds to your diet). **Even if you are in good health and your cholesterol level is in the target range, you may be offered a statin if you are at high risk of developing cardiovascular disease.**

What are statins?

Statins are medications used to lower the level of cholesterol in the blood and therefore protect the insides of your artery walls. Statins work by reducing the amount of cholesterol produced by the liver. They are one of the most prescribed medications in the UK.

Examples of statins include: atorvastatin, fluvastatin, pravastatin, rosuvastatin and simvastatin.

WHO IS OFFERED STATINS? PEOPLE WITH:

- Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the biggest 'silent' risk factor for death. Your future risk of CVD is calculated using a model known as the QRISK score. If your risk is over a certain threshold we offer statins. The links below have for more information on QRISK
- A history of CVD, including: angina, heart attack, stroke, peripheral arterial disease
- Adults with diabetes
- Adults with chronic kidney disease

HOW TO TAKE STATINS AND INFORMATION ON SIDE EFFECTS

- Statins are usually taken once a day at night time
- In most cases statins are taken for life as stopping the statin usually causes your cholesterol to rise again
- Most people taking statins experience no side effects
- Some people experience minor side effects such as stomach upset, nausea, headache. These are often only for a short time
- **Less than 1% of people experience muscle cramps**
- Rarely statins can put strain on the liver. For this reason we monitor your liver function with blood tests before you start treatment, 3 months after starting a statin and then every 12 months

PLEASE RESPOND WITH YOUR PREFERENCE:

1. **Yes I would like a statin, could my GP review my suitability for this**
2. **I would like to discuss this further, could I have an appointment with an appropriate clinician**
3. **I have read the information but I do not wish to start a statin at this stage**

Please see the following websites for more information on

- Cardiovascular risks and score:

<https://patient.info/heart-health/cardiovascular-disease-atheroma/cardiovascular-health-risk-assessment>

- Cholesterol:

<https://patient.info/heart-health/high-cholesterol>

- Statins:

<https://patient.info/heart-health/high-cholesterol/statins-and-other-lipid-lowering-medicines>