

Medications to Lower Cholesterol

Eating good, healthy foods that are low in saturated and trans fats, and exercising regularly, will make you feel better but may not reduce your risk enough.

If that's the case, you and your doctor can discuss medication options.

Statins are the first line treatment for lowering cholesterol levels and heart disease risk.

They work to block the liver from making cholesterol.

This in turn reduces the amount of cholesterol in the liver cells, which results in the liver removing cholesterol from the blood.

People in the following groups are most likely to benefit from statin therapy and should discuss the advantages and disadvantages of therapy with their physicians:

People who have had a cardiovascular event, such as heart attack, stroke, angina, peripheral artery disease, transient ischemic attack, or coronary or other arterial revascularization.

People 21 and older who have a very high level of LDL, or bad cholesterol, defined as 190 mg/dL or higher.

People with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes who are 40 to 75 years old with an LDL cholesterol level of 70-189 mg/dL.

The American Heart Association now recommends that doctors and healthcare providers use a risk assessment calculator to determine whether or not people without a history of heart disease might benefit from statins to lower their cardiovascular risk.

Adults between the ages of 40 to 75 years old, who have scored 7.5 percent or higher on this ten year risk calculator for heart attack or stroke, are advised to discuss statin therapy with their doctors.

So, if you don't know what your risk for heart disease and stroke is, it's important to find out.

In general, adults age twenty and over should have their cholesterol, and other traditional cardiovascular risk factors, checked every 4 to 6 years, as long as their results remain in the normal range.

Eat healthier foods, such as fruits, vegetables, high fiber foods, and low-fat or fat-free dairy.

And practice healthy substitution – have steamed vegetables rather than French fries, whole grain pasta with low-sodium tomato sauce instead of meat sauce, and fruit instead of ice cream.

Exercise on a regular basis.

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Running, bicycling, or simply walking are all good aerobic-type exercises.

In the end, controlling cholesterol has as much to do with a patient's choices, as it does with medical treatment.

"I always tell the patient it's a 50-50, I can educate them all I want on it but it's up to them to follow through. There's no magic pill for this and it's really hard work."

"Watch what you eat, do at least some exercise and listen to what the doctor is telling you that you need to do."

"It's worth the effort and you'll just enjoy life better, I think."