

# Heart Attack Medicine: Statins

You have been prescribed statin medicine to help treat your heart disease and lower your risk of having another heart attack.

To understand how statins work and why they can help you, it's helpful to look at what causes heart attacks.

The most common cause of heart attack is coronary artery disease.

This disease occurs when the tiny arteries that feed your heart with oxygen-rich blood become blocked with hard deposits called plaque.

One of the risk factors for coronary artery disease is high levels of cholesterol in your blood.

Cholesterol causes damage to the artery wall and helps make more plaque.

A heart attack can happen when pieces of plaque break off and a blood clot forms.

Statin medicines can help lower your levels of dangerous cholesterol.

*"... not only does it stabilize the cholesterol plaque that's already in these bypasses or regular arteries but in certain cases its actually caused them to regress..."*

They are usually prescribed, in addition to lifestyle changes, like a heart-healthy diet and exercise recommendations, to help lower your cholesterol and the risk of heart attack.

Statins work by reducing the amount of cholesterol your liver produces.

They lower the "bad" LDL cholesterol and triglycerides and raise the "good" HDL cholesterol.

There are several kinds of statins. Some of the common ones include Lipitor, Lescol, and Crestor.

There are generic versions of many statins available to help lower the cost.

Statins are also sometimes combined with other non-statin cholesterol-lowering medicine in a single pill that will help lower cholesterol.

Some statins are combined with another drug to help lower cholesterol and blood pressure.

Statins are a very common medicine with a good safety record.

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However, like any medicine, there may be side effects. Some side effects of statins may include: muscle pain, tenderness or weakness; memory loss or confusion; feeling tired; diarrhea or upset stomach.

In very rare cases, statins can cause serious muscle damage called rhabdomyolysis.

This causes severe pain, can lead to kidney failure, and can be life-threatening.

Before you start a statin, your healthcare provider should do blood tests to check your liver function.

And while you are taking a statin, your healthcare provider will test your liver function again if you show any symptoms of liver problems, like abdominal pain, dark-colored urine, or yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes.

If you experience side effects while taking statins, call your healthcare provider.

Switching to a different statin may help to lessen some side effects.

If you experience any type of severe side effects, such as severe muscle pain, trouble breathing, or other symptoms, that include headache, nausea, vomiting and altered consciousness, call 911 immediately.

Statins are very powerful medicines that can help lower your cholesterol, especially if they are taken while making healthy food choices and following an exercise program.

If you have any questions about your statin medicine, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist.