

# Statin Medicine Side Effects: What you need to know

## What is a statin?

A **statin** is a medicine that helps lower the amount of cholesterol in your blood and lowers your risk for heart attack and stroke. You and your health care provider will talk about your risk, and if a statin is right for you.

A statin is recommended for people at high risk:

- Had a heart attack, stroke, angioplasty or stent, or heart bypass surgery due to blocked arteries
- Have LDL-cholesterol of 190 or higher
- Have type 2 diabetes and are age 40 to 75
- Are age 40 to 75 and risk for a heart attack or stroke in the next 10 years is above a certain level using a risk estimator

In some cases, medicine may be right for you even if you are not in one of these groups.

Statin medicines are pills. Here are the names of some of them:

- Atorvastatin
- Fluvastatin
- Lovastatin
- Pitavastatin
- Pravastatin
- Rosuvastatin
- Simvastatin

## Side Effects

Most people take statins with no issues. Keep taking your medicine and talk to your health care provider if you have side effects such as:

- Muscle aches, pain or weakness
- Digestive problems
- Liver issues
- Memory problems, confusion
- High blood sugar or diabetes

## Who is at risk for statin side effects?

Sometimes people cannot take the prescribed statin type or dose because of severe side effects.

These factors increase your risk for severe side effects:

- Age over 80
- Female
- Asian ethnicity
- Kidney or liver disease
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Conditions such as hypothyroidism or neuromuscular disorders
- Family or personal history of muscle problems
- Drinking lots of grapefruit juice
- Taking medicines that interact with statins



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## What if I have side effects when taking a statin?

You and your provider will work together to find what works best for you to lower your risk for a heart attack or stroke. It may take some time to find the right amount and types of medicines that works best.

**Describe your symptoms in detail. This helps identify if the statin is causing the problem.**

- Where and when do you feel discomfort?
- When did your symptoms start?
- Does anything make your symptoms worse?
- Does anything make your symptoms better?

Your provider will review all your medicines, vitamins and supplements. They may affect how well the statin works.

**You and your provider have choices to help manage statin side effects**

- You may have lab work to check your liver, muscles, kidneys or thyroid.
- Your provider might ask you to stop taking the statin for a short time and then begin taking it again to see if the problem goes away or comes back again.
- You may take less of the statin, or take it every other day.
- A different type of statin might be prescribed.

**Talk to your health care provider about any side effects.**  
***Do not just stop taking your medicine.***



- You may take the statin at a different time of day.
  - + Taking the statin in the morning may lower its impact on your sleep.
  - + If exercise increases your symptoms, you may take less of the statin or take it at a different time.

If your statin doesn't lower your risk enough, or if you can't take a statin at all, you may be given a non-statin medicine to lower your LDL-cholesterol.

- **Ezetimibe** is a tablet taken every day.
- **PCSK9 inhibitors** are injections given every other week, or once a month.
- **Bempedoic acid** is a tablet taken every day. It is being studied to see if it lowers risk for heart attack or stroke.
- **Bile acid sequestrants** come in pill or powder form. It is taken once or twice a day, before meals.