

Expanded horizon of the cholesterol-lowering statin drugs to include treating cardio vascular risks recommended by the American Heart Association (AHA)

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Millions of more Americans could end up taking cholesterol-lowering statin drugs under new recommendations released November 2013 that advocate a dramatic shift in the way doctors assess and treat cardiovascular risk. Just as any other drug, there are both benefits and risks of cholesterol-lowering statin drugs (Lipitor, Zocor, and Crestor, to name a few). Statin drugs have been prescribed by doctors for lowering cholesterol which in increased levels can lead to heart attacks. The new AHA recommendation allows doctors to prescribe it for people who are at risk of heart disease in addition to that. Current patients, considering withdrawing from statin, worried about its risks, should not do that without consulting their physicians because of statin's expanded benefit to combat heart disease.



Tags: statin, cholesterol, heart disease, Lipitor, Zocor, Crestor, drug, exercise

Risk is defined by your age, your total cholesterol level, your good and bad cholesterol levels, your blood pressure, and whether you are a smoker. Your blood level of C-reactive protein (CRP) and whether either of your parents had an early heart attack also are factors. The decision on whether or not to take a statin drug or which statin drug should be taken, should be made in consultation with your doctor, who can take all your individual risk factors into account.

It seems that every week there is news about statins. One week there is bad news about possible new risks. The next week, you hear they are the best thing ever. There are increasing reports in literature citing that it prevents cancer, it is good for the brain and has many beneficial effects apart from the cardiovascular benefits of lowering total cholesterol in blood.

The first statin drug, mevastatin, was isolated from a fungus. Red yeast rice contains mevastatin, although different batches of this natural product contain different amounts of mevastatin. Several other statin drugs were derived from this fungal compound. Others are fully synthetic. All of them block an enzyme the body needs to create cholesterol. This blocking lowers the amount of bad cholesterol in the body.

Statin drugs include:

- Altacor, Altoprev, Mevacor (lovastatin)
- Crestor (rosuvastatin)
- Lescol (fluvastatin)
- Lipitor (atorvastatin)
- Livalo (pitavastatin)
- Pravachol (pravastatin)
- Zocor (simvastatin)

Clinical trials show that all of these cholesterol-lowering drugs cut the risk of heart disease by 25-30%. In the United States alone, over 30 million adults are taking a statin drug. If you have heart disease, or are at very high risk of heart disease with high cholesterol, statins are one of the best classes of drugs. When used taking into account one's personal health profile and with good monitoring, they are safe and effective. We all need to watch our cholesterol levels. Statins should be coupled with good diet and exercise. They are not a substitute for a healthy lifestyle.

Statin drugs are for people who are at risk of heart disease. But statin treatment is not for everyone. Some people definitely should not take statins. Pregnant women, or women of childbearing age not using contraception, should not take statin drugs and certain other drugs can have side effects and dangerous interactions with statins.

About the author: Dr. Nrusingha Mishra is a biomedical research scientist trained in medical chemistry, currently working for the Federal Government. He manages cancer related federal government research projects.

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