



# Health Awareness

## Staying Informed: What You Need To Know About Popular Cholesterol-Lowering Medications Called Statins

(NAPSA)—If you have high cholesterol, you're not alone. About 95 million Americans have an LDL, or "bad" cholesterol level above healthy levels. If you are one of these people, you need to know that high cholesterol is one of the major risk factors for heart disease.

Despite the best intentions, diet and exercise alone often aren't enough to get cholesterol levels to within a healthy range. In fact, many people may need more than a change in diet or the addition of exercise if they want to lower their cholesterol enough. Doctors may prescribe a cholesterol-lowering medicine based on cholesterol level and other risk factors for heart disease, such as:

- Age (45 years or older for men, 55 or older for women);
- Family history;
- High blood pressure;
- Diabetes; and/or
- Obesity (overweight).

The most prescribed type, or "class," of drugs for lowering cholesterol is statins. Statins work in the liver to help reduce the production of bad cholesterol and have been prescribed to millions of Americans.

### Stay Healthy—Stay Informed

Whether you have just been prescribed a statin or have been taking one for years, there are

things you should know and questions you should ask your doctor about the medication.

**Effectiveness**—First, it's important to discuss your family history with a doctor, as well as your personal overall risk for developing heart disease. Many different factors affect your individual risk for heart disease, and your doctor is your best source of information. Your physician can help determine the appropriate diet, helpful exercise and the best statin for you, based on your personal health history.

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### Did You Know?

**Did you know that when clinical studies are conducted, even patients who are taking a placebo, or sugar pill, have reported side effects?** 

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On average, statins lower cholesterol 20 percent to 60 percent. But you should keep in mind that not all statins work the same way in all people. When clinical studies are conducted with one statin, it doesn't necessarily mean the same study results would apply to other statins.

**Safety**—Most statins have a range of available doses—from 5 milligrams (mg) to 80 mg. All drugs, even those sold over-the-counter, may cause side effects.

Serious side effects are rare but may occur. Your doctor will monitor you while you're on medication.

**Risks vs. Benefits**—In many cases, the benefit of taking a statin consistently can have important long-term health consequences.

Here are some important questions to ask your doctor about the statin you are currently taking or are being prescribed:

- What are my personal risk factors for heart disease?
- What should my cholesterol goal be?
- What are the potential benefits of taking this statin?
- What are the risks of not taking this medicine?
- Do the benefits outweigh the risks?
- Does this statin have benefits beyond lowering my cholesterol?
- How long has my statin been on the market?
- Are there any known safety issues with my statin?
- Has my statin been studied at both high and low doses?
- Would you take this medicine yourself?

### Take Action

Remember, not all statins are the same. Talk with your doctor today about your heart health and which statin is right for you. For more information, visit [www.forcholesterol.com](http://www.forcholesterol.com).