



## The Benefits of Statins

### What are statins?

Statins (HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors) are cholesterol-lowering drugs that work by blocking the formation of cholesterol in the liver and increasing the production of the receptors on liver cells to clean the bad cholesterol from the blood.

### Why should you consider taking a statin?

Statins are the most effective and widely tested of cholesterol drugs. Drug therapy can be considered for patients who — in spite of adequate dietary therapy, regular physical activity and weight loss — still need more treatment to manage their blood cholesterol levels. Statins are also considered for patients with low or normal cholesterol levels if they have established heart disease, or are at risk for heart disease because of a clustering of other coronary heart disease risk factors, including:

- Age — If you are a man 45 years or older, or a woman 55 years or older.
- Family history — Anyone with a mother, sister or daughter with coronary heart disease before age 65; or with a father, brother or son with a history of coronary heart disease before age 55.
- Smoking — Anyone who smokes or who lives or works every day around people who smoke.
- High blood pressure — Anyone with a blood pressure of 140/90 mm Hg or higher, measured on two or more occasions.
- HDL cholesterol — For people whose HDL cholesterol level is less than 40 mg/dL.
- Diabetes — Anyone with a fasting blood sugar of 126 mg/dL or higher.

It's recommended that you work with your healthcare professional to determine if you could benefit from cholesterol-lowering drugs and lifestyle changes to reduce your risk for heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.

### How well do statins work?

Statins can reduce LDL-C, or "bad" cholesterol, by about 20 to 45 percent, depending on the dosage and drug. Newer statin drugs have been shown to even more significantly lower LDL-C, to as much as 63 percent.

Statins also raise HDL-C, or "good" cholesterol levels, by about 5 percent on average. Newer statins have shown an increase in HDL-C of up to 14 percent.

Statins are potentially life-saving drugs that should be considered seriously by patients at risk for heart disease.



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### **What are the side effects?**

Statin drugs have few (<5 percent) immediate short-term or long-term side effects and are considered as safe as aspirin therapy. The most common side effects are muscle aches and pain. These symptoms are usually mild-to-moderate and may subside as therapy continues. There is a risk of 1 to 2 percent per year for developing abnormalities in liver tests which is detected by routine blood test monitoring; these are reversible when the drug is stopped or reduced.<sup>1</sup>

Patients who are pregnant, have active or chronic liver disease, or who are allergic to statins shouldn't use statin drugs.

### **What you should think about**

The National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP) Adult Treatment Panel III (ATP III) guidelines were revised in 2001, the first update in nearly a decade. The guidelines recommend more aggressive cholesterol-lowering treatment and better identification of those at high risk for heart attack. Under the guidelines, a cholesterol level of 200 mg/dL or greater increases the risk for heart disease. An LDL (bad) cholesterol level of 100 mg/dL or more and/or an HDL (good) cholesterol level of 40 mg/dL or less increases the risk for heart disease.

The guidelines have also substantially expanded the number of Americans eligible for drug therapy. This includes raising the number of people on dietary treatment from about 52 million to 65 million, and increasing the number of patients eligible for cholesterol-lowering drug therapy from approximately 13 million to 36 million. Currently, it is estimated that only about one third of treated patients reach their LDL-cholesterol goal.

### **Take care. Take charge. Take *heart*.**

Heart disease is the #1 killer of women. It is a greater threat than all cancers combined. Since 1984, more women than men have died each year of heart disease.

Silver Cross Hospital's Women's HeartAdvantage Program is committed to helping women with heart disease. But while there is much a hospital, its physicians and nurses can do, we can make an even greater difference together with you. Take care of yourselves. Know what your risk is. Know what your heart health indicators are. And then take charge. Choose to quit smoking, to eat better, to exercise more, and to improve your health. Because women of America: this is your life. We hope you'll put your heart into it.

For more information on the Silver Cross Hospital Women's HeartAdvantage Program, call 1-888-660-HEAL (4325) or go to [www.silvercross.org](http://www.silvercross.org).



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