

Statins

atorvastatin (Lipitor[®])

fluvastatin (Lescol[®])

lovastatin (Mevacor[®])

pravastatin (Pravachol[®])

rosuvastatin (Crestor[®])

simvastatin (Zocor[®])

Pharmacy Services

This is intended as a general reference.

It does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance called a lipid. It circulates in the blood. Cholesterol is both made in the liver and absorbed from food. We all need a certain amount of cholesterol for our bodies to function normally.

There are different types of cholesterol: LDL (low density lipoprotein) and HDL (high-density lipoprotein). Too much cholesterol can build up in the blood vessels. The medical term for this is atherosclerosis (say *ah-ther-oh-skler-oh-sis*). This can reduce the blood flow and nutrient supply to your organs, such as your heart and brain. Lowering what we call the LDL (low density lipoprotein) cholesterol, commonly known as “bad cholesterol”, might reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke.

What are statins used for?

We use this type of medicine for any of these reasons:

- to prevent heart attack and stroke
- to lower cholesterol levels

If you have had a heart attack or stroke recently, your heart or stroke doctor might prescribe a statin even if your blood cholesterol levels are normal. This is because statins might reduce the chances of having another heart attack or stroke.

How does this medicine work?

Along with exercise and a healthy diet, statins are a group of medicines that help lower cholesterol levels in the blood.

Statins work by reducing the amount of cholesterol made by the liver. A lower LDL cholesterol can reduce your chances of having a heart attack or stroke. Statins might also help your blood vessels become less stiff and inflamed.

What should I expect?

You will not be able to feel a decrease in your cholesterol level. Expect your doctor to ask you to go for a blood test regularly to check your cholesterol levels.

The goal for your cholesterol level depends on your current medical conditions. Ask your heart doctor, stroke doctor, or family doctor if you have reached your target for cholesterol level.

How do I take a statin?

- Take this medicine exactly as prescribed.
- Atorvastatin and rosuvastatin can be taken any time but some statins (simvastatin, pravastatin, lovastatin, and fluvastatin) should be taken in the evening.
- It is best to take the medication at the same time each day so you don't miss a dose.
- If you do miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If you remember the next day or close to the time of your next dose, just take your next scheduled dose.
Do not double the dose to make up for the missed dose.
- **Do not** stop taking this medication or adjust your dose without first talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

What should I watch for?

Most people tolerate this medicine well. Some side effects to watch for:

- muscle pain or cramping
- diarrhea

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if any of these side effects bother you, don't go away, or get worse.

Get medical care right away if any of the following happen:

- severe muscle pain or weakness
- brown or tea-coloured urine
- trouble breathing
- chest tightness
- chest pain continues even after using nitroglycerin
- swelling of the lips, face, tongue or throat
- signs or symptoms of stroke, such as a facial droop, arm drift, and slurred speech



Other helpful points:

Some substances can interact with this type of medicine. Check with your pharmacist or doctor before starting new medicines or supplements, including herbal medicines, and alternative and natural products.

You should not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice when taking certain statins. Ask your pharmacist if the statin you are taking is one of these.

Some medicines should not be taken during pregnancy. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.