

Statins

This leaflet gives information about taking statins to prevent heart disease, even if you're at low risk of having heart problems. It's not supposed to replace the patient information leaflet that comes with the medicine, but should be read alongside it. If you have any questions or are unsure about any of the information in this leaflet, please speak to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

Clinic contact details

What is a statin?

Statins are medicines that help lower your cholesterol. Cholesterol causes hardening or narrowing of your arteries and cardiovascular disease.

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a fatty substance in your blood that your body needs to function, but can cause health problems if you have too much.

What is cardiovascular disease?

'Cardio' means heart, and 'vascular' means blood vessels. Cardiovascular disease is a general term for diseases that affect the heart or blood vessels. It includes angina, heart attacks and strokes, as well as other conditions.

Why are you being offered a statin now?

This is due to recent evidence from a large international study called [REPRIEVE](#), of more than 7,000 people living with HIV. The study found that people taking a statin tablet every day reduced their chance of getting cardiovascular disease by about a third (36%). This means that people taking a statin were much less likely to have a heart attack or stroke than people who did not.



Scan QR code for the
REPRIEVE study

Which statin is right for you?

The most common statin is atorvastatin. You might be given a different statin (such as pravastatin, rosuvastatin, fluvastatin or simvastatin) if atorvastatin interacts with other medicines you take, or if you have side effects from taking it. Please talk to your clinic team about which one is right for you.

How to take a statins

- Statins come as tablets that are taken each day.
- Atorvastatin and rosuvastatin can be taken at any time, but it's best to take it at the same time each day.
- Simvastatin or pravastatin should be taken in the evening.
- Swallow the statin tablets **whole** with a glass of water.
- Do not crush your tablet. If you have trouble swallowing this tablet, please contact your clinic team.

What to do if you miss a dose

Statins work best if there's a constant amount of the medicine in your body. If you're worried about forgetting to take your medicines, speak to your clinic team.

Sometimes you might forget a dose. If this happens, follow the guidance below and speak with your clinic team as soon as possible for advice.

Advice on missed doses

- **Never** take a double dose to make up for one you have missed.
- If you forget to take your dose, take it as soon as you remember it on the same day. If you do not remember until the next day, skip the missed dose and take your next dose at the usual time.

Common side effects of statins

If you have any side effects that trouble you, or if you get any new symptoms after you start a statin, do not stop taking your medicine. Instead, contact your clinic team to discuss other treatment options, or they'll tell you how to stop your medicine safely.

Some of the most common side effects are listed below. For a full list of side effects, please check the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine.

Stomach side effects

- Feeling sick (nausea)
- Runny poo
- Hard poo and feeling bloated

Head side effects

- Headaches
- Dizziness

Other side effects

- Muscle aches and pains
- Feeling unusually tired or weak
- Sleep problems
- Low number of blood platelets (this might mean you bruise or bleed more easily)

Taking statins if you're pregnant or breastfeeding

Statins should not be taken by anyone who is pregnant or breastfeeding, because there's no clear evidence about whether it's safe to do so. If you become pregnant, or are planning to start a family, speak to your doctor so that they can support you and your unborn child.

Other medicines and statins

It's important that you tell anyone prescribing you medicines about any medicines that you're already taking. This includes:

- prescribed medicines
- recreational or party drugs
- vitamins and supplements that you buy from a pharmacy or shop
- any herbal or homeopathic remedies

Some HIV medicines will interact with statins. Your GP will suggest the correct dose and statin to start.

Always tell your clinic team if you're taking the following medicines. Your GP might prescribe a different statin, or a lower dose (amount) of your current one. Sometimes they might ask you to temporarily stop taking your statin. (Please note that you should tell the clinic team about any medicines you're taking, even if they're not mentioned below.)

Medicine or foods	Why this is important
Grapefruit juice	This can affect some statins and increase your risk of side effects. Your doctor might tell you to avoid it completely or take only very small amounts
Alcohol	Drinking large amounts of alcohol can increase your risk of side effects. Do not drink more than the recommended weekly amount. Read the NHS information about alcohol here: www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-advice/
Certain antibiotics and antifungals (itraconazole, ketoconazole, erythromycin, clarithromycin)	These medicines can increase statin levels. Your statin might need to be temporarily stopped if you're taking any of these medicines for a short period.
Warfarin (anticoagulant medicine used to prevent blood clots)	Statins can increase warfarin levels and the risk of bleeding. Your INR will be checked before starting statins and regularly throughout treatment.
Ciclosporin (medicine that suppresses the immune system) Verapamil and diltiazem (medicines used to treat conditions affecting the heart and blood vessels) Amiodarone (medicine used to treat irregular heartbeats)	These medicines can increase statin levels and the risk of side effects. You'll be started on the lowest effective dose.
Fibrates (medicines that also help reduce cholesterol levels in the blood)	Statins can increase the risk of muscle aches and pains when used with fibrates. You'll be closely monitored and the dose of your statin might need to be changed.

The long-term effects of statins

Most people who take statins report no side effects. There's a very small risk of weight gain and type 2 diabetes with some types of statin. Speak to your GP or clinic team if you have any concerns.

Stopping taking statins

If you're thinking about stopping your statin, talk to your doctor first. Stopping a statin can cause your cholesterol to rise, increasing your risk of cardiovascular disease. If you get side effects, talk to your GP or clinic team to see if it is a side effect or an unrelated problem. Your doctor might suggest that you reduce your dose or change your medicine.

More information?

The NHS website has useful information on [statins](#).



Scan QR code for NHS information about statins

Starting to take statins

If you would like to start taking statins, make an appointment with your GP. You can show them this leaflet so they understand why you're asking them for statins. They might request a blood test first, and you'll need another blood test after you start taking them.

If you're not registered with a GP, or have difficulty getting a statin from the GP, please speak to your clinic team.

Other ways to help lower your cholesterol

You should try to maintain a healthy weight, eat a balanced diet and exercise regularly. Stopping smoking and cutting down alcohol also reduces your cholesterol. You can speak to your GP to get more support.



Scan me for BHF information about lowering your cholesterol

More information can also be found on the [British Heart Foundation website](#)

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