



Visit your doctor to talk about your health and the medicines you may need. This factsheet will give you information about a type of medicine. You will learn what questions you should ask your doctor about this medicine. Don't be afraid to ask questions. It is very important for your health.

Medicines that Help Lower Your High Cholesterol

High cholesterol can cause heart disease and lead to a heart attack, stroke and premature death. Hundreds of thousands of people in the United States die from heart disease each year.

There are things you can do to control your cholesterol and reduce your risk of having a heart attack or stroke. The first step is to know your cholesterol level and your chances of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 10 years. If it is high, the following information will help you have a conversation with your doctor about this topic.



What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a substance the body makes and is needed to build healthy cells and make vitamin D. Cholesterol is also found in many foods we eat like red meats, dairy products, and fried food. If you eat too many of these foods, the amount of cholesterol in your blood can go up. Your body can also make more cholesterol than it needs. When there is too much cholesterol in your blood, your chances of getting heart disease increases.

Red Meat



Dairy Products



Fried Food



What increases my chances for a heart attack or stroke?

“Bad” cholesterol or “low-density lipoprotein” (LDL) is the type of cholesterol that can stay on the walls of the arteries and possibly lead to a heart attack or stroke. Other factors that can increase your chances of a heart attack or stroke are age, smoking, high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease.

Your doctor can help you use a special calculator that can tell you your chances of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 10 years. If you have a low chance, you may not need medicine. If you have a high chance, you might need to take a type of medicine that helps reduce your bad cholesterol (LDL) level.

Get screened for high cholesterol

Starting at age 35, men should get screened every 5 years.

Starting at age 45, women should get screened every 5 years if they smoke, have diabetes, or any other risk for heart disease.



How do I know if I need a prescription medicine for my cholesterol?

Changing some habits can help lower your cholesterol level and your chances of having a heart attack or stroke, so:

- Eat less red meat, margarine, fast foods, pastries, and other baked sweets
- Eat fruits, vegetables, and beans
- Eat whole grains like oat bran and barley
- Exercise
- If you smoke, quit
- Lose weight if you need to

If these changes in diet and exercise do not help lower your bad cholesterol (LDL) to a normal level, then your doctor might prescribe a medicine to help control your cholesterol levels.

Your doctor may also decide to prescribe medicine, even if your bad (LDL) cholesterol levels are normal, if you have other health problems like diabetes or high blood pressure, or if you have had a heart attack, a stroke, or have other heart problems.

The medicines that help lower your cholesterol are called **statins**. There are seven statins available in the market. Some work better than others in reducing the possibility of a heart attack or death from heart disease or a stroke.

What else can increase your chances of a heart attack?

- Older age
- Diabetes
- Family history of heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Lack of exercise
- Obesity
- Smoking



Which statin should you choose?

This will depend on your overall chance of having a heart attack or stroke over the next 10 years.

Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs evaluated the different types of statins by comparing how well they work, how safe they are, and how much they cost.

Consumer Reports recommends the following generic statins, depending on your personal health situation:



In the United States, “generic” medicines are just as good as brand-name medicines. They are just as safe and work just like the brand-name medicine, and they cost a lot less money. Ask your doctor if you can get a generic medicine instead of a brand-name medicine.

Type of statin	Who should use it
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Atorvastatin (10 mg or 20 mg)</i> • <i>Lovastatin (40 mg)</i> • <i>Pravastatin (40 mg)</i> • <i>Simvastatin (20 mg or 40 mg)</i> 	People with a high chance of having a heart attack or stroke
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Atorvastatin (40 mg or 80 mg)</i> 	People with a very high chance of having a heart attack or stroke

Stores like Kroger, Sam’s Club, Target, and Wal-Mart have discount generic medicine programs. If you buy your medicine using these programs, a month’s supply may cost you as little as \$4. Your supply for 3 months may cost you only \$10.

To learn more about this topic go to:

<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/2014/03/treating-high-cholesterol-with-statins/index.htm>



How to Get the Best Price for Your Medicines

- **Ask for a generic:** Tell your pharmacist you want a generic medicine instead of the brand-name. You will pay less for a generic. Not all brand-name medicines have a generic, but many do.
- **Compare prices:** Call or visit three different pharmacies. Give them the name of the medicine and ask how much it costs. Ask if they have a drug discount program that can help you pay less for your medicine. Buy your medicine from the pharmacy that gives you the cheapest price.
- **Sign up for patient assistance programs:** Most companies that make medicines have programs that help people that do not have a lot of money and do not have insurance to get brand-name medicines for free or at a low cost. The Partnership for Prescription Assistance can help you find a program: www.pparx.org or 1-888-477-2669.

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