



# Should older adults continue or stop taking statins?

## A guide for healthcare providers, people taking statins & carers

As people age, their healthcare needs change. It's important to review medications regularly. If a person is 65 years or older and taking a statin, they may want to discuss with their healthcare provider whether continuing the medication is still the best choice.

### These recommendations are for:

- Healthcare professionals caring for people aged 65 years or older who are taking a statin, and tolerating it well
- People aged 65 years or older who are taking a statin
- Carers of older adults taking statins

### What do these recommendations mean?

These are our suggestions, but the “best” choice will be different for everyone. People taking statins and/or their carers should talk to a trusted healthcare provider about the decision. A person's health needs and preferences should be considered.



#### Factors that might prompt a conversation

- Complex health
- Advanced illness
- Concern about too many medications
- Change in health status (such as after a recent hospitalization)

## Recommendations

We suggest **continuing statins** for adults 65 years or older who are not near end-of-life

- This recommendation applies both to people with a history of heart or blood vessel disease and those without heart or blood vessel disease.
- Stopping a statin might increase the chance of serious heart or blood vessel events though the research is uncertain.

We suggest **stopping statins** for adults 65 years or older who are near the end-of-life (life expectancy less than 1 year)

- In this case, stopping a statin does not appear to increase the chance of heart or blood vessel events or death. Stopping a statin reduces the burden of taking additional medications.



### What does this mean for you?

*This leaflet is not a substitute for medical advice.* Before deciding to stop or continue a statin, people should talk with their healthcare provider about the risks and benefits specific to them.





## Additional information about the recommendations

This guideline was created because healthcare providers have asked for guidance on continuing or stopping statins for older adults.

Before writing these recommendations, our study team reviewed all the available research on this topic. Our goal was to help healthcare professionals and people taking statins or their carers make decisions about continuing or stopping statins.

### What does the research show?

Our team reviewed 36 studies about stopping statins in older adults. There were 35 studies on people taking statins who were not near end-of-life. There was one study on stopping statins for those near end-of-life.

#### For people not near end-of-life *(life expectancy more than 12 months)*

Stopping statins might increase the risk of heart or blood vessel problems. We are not very sure about the results from those studies. This was the case for people with and without history of heart or blood vessel disease. We know from previous research that there is more evidence for the benefits of starting statins in people aged 65-75 years. The decision to stop a statin is likely most relevant after age 75 years.

#### For people near end-of-life *(life expectancy less than 12 months)*

There was probably no difference in the risk of premature death whether statins were continued or stopped.

### Consider what matters most to you

Everyone's health goals, priorities, and circumstances are different. People may also have different health circumstances. **The “best” choice will be different for everyone.** Some people may choose to continue taking statins to reduce the risk of heart or blood vessel disease, while others may prefer to stop. People might want to stop if taking multiple medications feels burdensome.

### Talk to a healthcare provider

The decision to stop or continue statins should be personalized to health needs, preferences, and what is most important to a person. Having a thorough discussion with a healthcare provider can determine the best course of action for an individual person.



These recommendations are not for people who experience side effects of statins.

