Information for adults 65 years and older taking statins, and for their carers

What are statins?

Statins are medications that lower cholesterol in the blood. Most importantly, statins can lower the chance of serious heart events like heart attacks.

Your chance of benefit from a statin depends on your individual risk of having a heart event. People who have had a prior heart attack or stroke are at the highest risk. Your healthcare provider can talk with you about your individual risk.

Examples of statins include:

- Atorvastatin (Lipitor®)
- Rosuvastatin (Crestor®)
- Simvastatin (Zocor®)



It is good practice to review medications on a regular basis.

Most people will want to keep taking a statin.

The best evidence for the benefit of statins is in people aged 65-75 years.

The decision to discontinue a statin is likely most relevant after age 75 years and for those who do not have a history of heart or blood vessel disease.

Statin safety

Most people don't have negative effects from taking statins. Some people report muscle aches or pains after starting statins. These may not always be caused by the statin. Serious side effects from statins are very rare. If you have any concerns, talk with your healthcare provider.

Why should I consider stopping?

Reviewing medications is a good practice, especially as we age. Deciding to stop a medication is not about giving up. It is about making sure your medications are the best fit for you at your current stage of life and health.

Many people will want to keep taking a statin. But in some situations, it makes sense to talk to a healthcare provider about your statin.

These situations could include having:

- A complex health condition
- An advanced health problem such as cancer
- Problems with memory or daily function
- Concerns about taking too many pills

In these situations, the benefit of statins is less certain.

What is the right decision for me?

The best choice will be different for everyone. Everyone's health goals and priorities are different.

Talk to a trusted healthcare provider about the decision.

Consider what matters most for you. Your individual health needs and preferences should be considered.

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What are the benefits and harms of stopping?

For adults 65 years and older at end-of-life (a life expectancy of less than 1 year): stopping a statin likely does not increase the chance of dying or having a serious heart event compared to continuing statins.

For adults 65 years and older not near end-of-life (a life expectancy more than 1 year): stopping a statin might increase the chance of a serious heart or blood vessel event. This applies to people with or without heart or blood vessel disease. Research on this point is very uncertain, and more research is needed.

Stopping a statin means taking one less pill per day.

Our suggestions

We assembled a group of doctors, pharmacists, nurses, and patients, to look at all the studies available related to stopping statins. Based on what we learned, we made suggestions for older adults taking statins:

For adults 65 years and older not near end-of-life:
We suggest continuing a statin.

For adults 65 years and older at end-of-life:
We suggest stopping a statin.

These are suggestions only. You should think about it and talk to a trusted healthcare provider about the decision. Different choices will be appropriate for different individuals.

If you decide with your healthcare provider to stop a statin, it can be done without slowly lowering the dose.

If you are unsure about what to do, remember that you can revisit your decision in the future.

Monitoring is not usually needed after stopping statins, but discuss this with your healthcare provider.

Information about statins

More details about the research

Our team's guideline

Your statin plan notes

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