

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Katie Gravesen, DC

Dangers of High Cholesterol Medications

Statins (aka HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors) are a commonly prescribed medication for high cholesterol.

A review study by Beatrice Golomb, M.D., Ph.D. and Marcella A. Evans, of UC San Diego and UC Irvine Schools of Medicine, concludes that statins are not the “quick-fix” solution many patients are led to believe they are. In contrast, these drugs are linked with a plethora of hazardous side effects. They also alter the biochemical function of the body, sparking a chain reaction linked with a vast array of disease processes.

Dr. Gravesen is concerned about the widespread use of statins, and has compiled an overview of the research. Read on to learn more!



Adverse Effects of Statins

- Muscle problems
- Memory loss
- Difficulty concentrating
- Mood and behavioral problems
- Tingling, burning or numbness
- Headache
- Joint pain
- Abdominal pain
- Sleep disorders
- Sexual dysfunction
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Swelling
- Shortness of breath
- Vision problems
- Temperature imbalance
- Blood sugar imbalance
- Skin problems
- Red or flushed skin
- Ringing in the ears
- Nausea
- Upset stomach
- Hunger
- Changes in weight
- Changes in blood pressure

What’s Really Behind the Rise in Statin Use?

Poor diet, lack of activity and emotional stress all contribute to high cholesterol and cardiovascular risks. Consequently, incidence of high cholesterol are escalating with more people leading sedentary lifestyles, eating “fast food” diets low in nutrients and engaging in stressful pursuits.

In recent years, under pressure from pharmaceutical companies, physicians and medical organizations have lowered the standard cut-off level of what is considered “high” cholesterol. In addition, aggressive direct-to-consumer marketing campaigns position statins as a “quick fix” and encourage consumers to ask their doctors for specific drugs, which they may not need. Consequently, more and more individuals are being prescribed statins.

Testing Controversy

Dr. Gravesen wants patients to be aware of the controversy surrounding the standard tests for high cholesterol.

Not only may the “cut-off” level used to define high cholesterol be too low,

research indicates that total cholesterol is not as important an indicator as the ratios of HDL (“good”) cholesterol to LDL (“bad”) cholesterol and VLDL (“very bad”) cholesterol.

Cardiovascular health experts also argue that cholesterol levels are not the best gauge of cardiovascular disease risks. They point out that tests focusing on markers of cardiovascular inflammation, such as homocysteine, c-reactive protein and plaktrack, lipoprotein A, apolipoprotein B and fibrinogen are far more significant indicators.

To learn more about this controversy, read *The Heart Disease Breakthrough* by Thomas Yannios, *Before Heart Attacks* by Robert H. Superko, *The Heart Revolution* by Kilmer S. McCully and Martha McCully and



**Katie Gravesen, DC, Sol Chiropractic (808) 270-2530
30 E Lipoa #4-102, Kihei, HI 96753 www.solchiro.com**

The Heart of the Matter by Peter Slago.

Statins: Danger Ahead

The review study on statins includes findings from nearly 900 studies on the adverse effects of statins. The study is published in the *American Journal of Cardiovascular Drugs*. “Muscle problems are the best known of statin drugs’ adverse side effects,” notes Dr. Golomb.

“But cognitive problems and peripheral neuropathy, or pain or numbness in the extremities like fingers and toes, are also widely reported.” A spectrum of other problems, ranging from blood glucose elevations to tendon problems, can also occur as side effects from statins.

Dr. Golomb’s findings also show clear evidence that higher statin doses or more powerful statins — those with a stronger ability to lower cholesterol — as well as certain genetic conditions are linked to greater risk of developing side effects (*Am J Cardiovasc Drugs* 2008;8:373-418).

Alarming, the findings also reveal that “physician awareness of such side effects is reportedly low.”

The Mitochondria Connection

The review study highlights powerful evidence demonstrating that statins inhibit function of the body’s energy-producing cells, called mitochondria. This “mitochondria connection” is likely to blame for many of the adverse effects associated with statins.

Mitochondria produce most of the disease-causing “free radical” compounds in the body. When mitochondrial function is impaired, the body produces less energy and more “free radicals.”

What’s more, statins also inhibit production of compounds that scavenge free radicals and neutralize them before they incite harm. Coenzyme Q10

(“Q10”) is one particular antioxidant free radical-scavenger.

The study finds that statins lower Q10 levels by blocking a pathway involved in cholesterol production — the same pathway by which Q10 is produced. Statins also reduce the blood cholesterol that transports Q10 and other fat-soluble antioxidants.

“The loss of Q10 leads to loss of cell energy and increased free radicals which, in turn, can further damage mitochondrial DNA,” adds Dr. Golomb, who explains that loss of Q10 may lead to a greater likelihood of symptoms arising from statins in patients with existing mitochondrial damage — since these people especially rely on ample Q10 to help bypass this damage.

Because statins may cause more mitochondrial problems over time — and as these energy powerhouses tend to weaken with age — new adverse effects can also develop the longer a patient takes statin drugs (*Am J Cardiovasc Drugs* 2008;8:373-418).

“The risk of adverse effects goes up as age goes up, and this helps explain why,” says Dr. Golomb. “This also helps explain why statins’ benefits have not been found to exceed their risks in those over 70 or 75 years old, even those with heart disease.”

High blood pressure and diabetes are linked to higher rates of mitochondrial problems, so these conditions are also clearly linked to a higher risk of statin complications.

Not a Quick Fix

Taking medication may seem like an easy way out of a high cholesterol problem, but the risk of statins makes it anything but. The healthy way to keep cholesterol levels in check is not easy. It involves a commitment to the wellness-oriented chiropractic lifestyle.

Fortunately, we are here to help. Initi-

ating regular preventive chiropractic care frequently jumpstarts individuals on the path to wellness. Find out more by calling our office today and scheduling an evaluation with the doctor.

Also, ask the doctor to suggest programs, books and handouts to assist you in learning about specific diet and lifestyle strategies that may lower cholesterol and cardiovascular risks naturally.

Important Note: Never discontinue statins or any other medication without first consulting your medical care provider. Abruptly discontinuing statins may pose serious health risks. Ask your medical provider to work with you to develop a safe plan.



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