CHOLESTEROL DRUGS: “STATINS”

HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors, also known as “statin” drugs, are used to prevent or treat cardiovascular diseases by improving cholesterol levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic Name</th>
<th>Brand Name(s)</th>
<th>Strengths (mg)</th>
<th>Usual Doses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atorvastatin</td>
<td>Lipitor</td>
<td>10, 20, 40, 80</td>
<td>10-80 mg/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluvastatin</td>
<td>Lescol, Lescol XL</td>
<td>20, 40, 80 (XL)</td>
<td>20-80 mg/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovastatin</td>
<td>Mevacor, Altocor</td>
<td>10, 20, 40, 60 (Altocor)</td>
<td>20-80 mg/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pravastatin</td>
<td>Pravachol</td>
<td>10, 20, 40</td>
<td>10-80 mg/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosuvastatin</td>
<td>Crestor</td>
<td>5, 10, 20, 40</td>
<td>5-40 mg/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simvastatin</td>
<td>Zocor</td>
<td>10, 20, 40, 80</td>
<td>10-80 mg/day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POTENTIAL USES:

1) Hyperlipidemia (High Cholesterol)
2) Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease
3) Treatment of Established Cardiovascular Disease

CONTRAINDICATIONS: (Do not use if any of these conditions are present)

1) Active Liver Disease or Elevated Liver Function Tests (>3X normal)
2) Pregnancy
3) Nursing Mothers

FDA PREGNANCY CATEGORY:

X (Highly unsafe – should never be used during pregnancy or nursing)

ADVERSE REACTIONS

1) Muscle Aches (Myalgias)
2) Abnormal Liver Function Tests
3) Gastrointestinal disturbances: abdominal pain, nausea, diarrhea

MONITORING REQUIREMENTS

1) Fasting Lipid Panel
2) Liver Function Tests – prior to therapy, at 6-12 weeks, periodically thereafter

Disclaimer: This handout is provided as an educational service for patients. It is not all-inclusive, and is not intended to replace other sources of drug information. Please refer to each drug’s package insert for complete drug prescribing information.
COMMON QUESTIONS

1) I’ve heard a lot of bad things about statin drugs in the news. Should I be concerned?

Like all drugs, statins have potential side effects (partially listed above). However, the vast majority of patients do not have any problems taking these drugs. When side effects do occur, they are usually minor, and are easily reversible if the drug is stopped. With proper monitoring, statin drugs have an established safety record.

Statin drugs are among the most commonly prescribed drugs in this country, and are extremely effective in preventing and treating important cardiovascular diseases such as heart attack and stroke.

2) What should I do if I feel muscle aches while taking a statin drug?

If you are experiencing muscle aches from the drug, you should contact your physician to order a blood test – specifically, a creatine kinase, or CK level. If your symptoms are mild, the drug can usually be continued until the test results are available. If your CK levels are very high (more than 10 times normal), the drug will be stopped immediately, and permanently. If your CK levels are mildly elevated (high, but less than 10 times normal), you should discuss with your doctor whether or not you should continue the medication.

If you are experiencing moderate or severe muscle aches from the drug, stop the drug immediately, then follow the directions above for obtaining a blood test for CK levels.

3) How often should I have blood tests while taking a statin drug?

Cholesterol levels and liver function tests should be obtained before starting statin therapy. After starting a statin, these tests should be repeated in 6-12 weeks, to assess the efficacy and safety of the therapy. After that, blood tests should be repeated periodically- usually every 3 to 12 months, depending on the patient.

4) What is my “goal” cholesterol level?

This is a complex question. During your office visit, you should discuss your cholesterol goals with your doctor. In general, LDL (“bad”) cholesterol levels below 100 mg/dL are ideal; levels less than 70 mg/dL may be preferred in high-risk patients with established cardiovascular disease. Triglyceride levels should ideally be less than 150 mg/dL. Normal HDL (“good”) cholesterol levels are more than 40 mg/dL for men and more than 50 mg/dL for women.

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