**Cholesterol and Lipid Lowering medication**

**Why have I been offered a Statin or Lipid-lowering medication?**

You have been diagnosed with a condition that may include Chronic Kidney Disease, a previous stroke or TIA or a form of Cardiovascular Disease such as Myocardial Infarction or Peripheral Arterial Disease. **Patients with such diagnoses are recommended to take a lipid-lowering medication as a way of reducing risk of illness and death associated with cardiovascular disease.**

These are traditionally Statin medications, but we do have other medications that can be offered such as Ezetimibe or Bempedoic Acid.

**What are Statins and other Lipid-Lowering medications?**

Statins are a group of medicines that can help lower the level of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol in the blood.

LDL cholesterol is often referred to as "**bad cholesterol",** and statins reduce the production of it inside the liver.

Having a high level of LDL cholesterol is potentially dangerous, as it can lead to a hardening and narrowing of the arteries (atherosclerosis) and **cardiovascular disease** (CVD).

CVD is a general term that describes a disease of the heart or blood vessels. It's a very common cause of death in the UK.

The main types of CVD are:

• **coronary heart disease** – when the blood supply to the heart becomes restricted

• **angina** – chest pain caused by reduced blood flow to the heart muscles

• **heart attacks –** when the supply of blood to the heart is suddenly blocked

• **stroke** – when the supply of blood to the brain becomes blocked

Statins are medications used to lower the level of cholesterol in the blood and protect the insides of the artery walls.

If you are unable to take a statin then you will be offered an alternative such as Ezetimibe.

**Taking Lipid-Lowering medication:**

The most commonly prescribed statin is **Atorvastatin.**

Statins come as tablets that are taken once a day. You will require a blood test prior to starting the statin, 3 months after staring the medication and then on an annual basis to ensure your cholesterol has improved.

**We do not prescribe these medications to:**

People with active liver disease.

People with transaminase levels that are three or more times the upper limit of normal.

Pregnant women

Breastfeeding women

**We use caution if:**

You have had a haemorrhagic stroke

You have kidney disease

You regularly drink large amounts of alcohol

**Side effects of Lipid-lowering medications:**

Many people who take statins experience no or very few side effects. Others experience some side effects, but these are usually minor, such as diarrhoea, a headache or feeling sick.

Unfortunately, there have been patients who have declined or stopped their statins due to negative media coverage- despite clinical trials showing good tolerance.

In some cases statins can rarely cause muscle inflammation (swelling) and damage to your kidneys.

If you have any symptoms that you believe may be down to your statin you should speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

The risks of any side effects also must be balanced against the benefits of preventing serious problems.

Always read your medication leaflet.

**Alternatives to statins:**

As outlined above we can use different medications to lower your bad cholesterol or lipids. These include Ezetimibe and Bempedoic Acid. They work in similar ways to Statins and the side effect profile is also similar. These are used if a patient does not tolerate a statin or the statin is not bringing down their cholesterol down to the recommended level. They can be used in combination.

For further information about statins:

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/treatments/statins>

https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/ezetimibe/about-ezetimibe/

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/statins/>

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/statins/side-effects/