Brownlee HIV

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

Statins - Are they right for me?

Information for patients

Who is this Leaflet For?

People living with HIV over the age of 40 and attending the Brownlee Clinic.

Cardiovascular Disease and HIV

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) refers to hardening of the arteries. This can lead to conditions such as angina, heart attacks and strokes. Lots of things can affect this like smoking, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. We know that people living with HIV are already at increased risk of CVD.
Every year your clinician will calculate your CVD Risk Score.

Statins and HIV

In a study called REPRIEVE it was shown that in people living with HIV aged 40-75 years and who took a statin, there was a 35% reduction in the risk of heart disease and strokes compared with those that did not. This was shown even in people with low CVD Risk Scores and normal cholesterol levels.

As a result of this trial the British HIV Association (BHIVA) recommends that people living with HIV aged 40 years and over should be offered a statin to help prevent CVD

What are statins?

Statins are a class of medicine used to lower cholesterol. While some of the cholesterol in your blood comes from food, most is made in the body by the liver. Statins work by reducing the amount of cholesterol made by the liver. They also work by helping the liver remove some of the cholesterol that is already in the blood. Statins come as a single tablet to be taken every-day and they are usually a lifelong medicine.

Side effects

Like most drugs, statins can have side effects but **the majority of people take them with no issues**. They are one of the most prescribed drugs in the UK. There are several types of statins, so if one doesn't suit you, you may be able to try another one.

Some common side effects of statins include muscle cramps, nausea, constipation or diarrhoea and headaches. If you experience nausea, taking statins after food may help. In people at risk of diabetes, statins may very slightly increase the risk of developing diabetes. More serious but much rarer side effects include inflammation of the liver and pancreas.

If you develop any symptoms, please discuss these with your GP.

Interactions

Statins can sometimes interact with other medications, including HIV antiretrovirals. If you decide to start a statin, your HIV clinician will recommend to your GP which statin what and dose is suitable.

Your GP will check that any selected statin will also not interact with any of your other (non-HIV) medication.

Grapefruit juice can increase the blood levels of statins and increase the risk of side effects. Avoid drinking large amounts of grapefruit juice (For example, over 1 glass a day) when on statins.

Other ways to reduce your risk of heart disease

There are many ways you can improve your lifestyle to reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease:

- Stop smoking
- Lose weight if your BMI is over 30
- Exercise regularly
- Follow a healthy balanced diet
- Manage stress
- If present, ensure high blood pressure and diabetes are under control
- Get the recommended amount of sleep at night
- Avoid excess or binge drinking

Your GP or practice nurse can give you information about reducing your risk of heart disease, quitting smoking and improving your diet.

More information

Information about statins: 🌐 **https://www.nhsinform.scot/tests-and-treatments/medicines-and-medical-aids/types-of-medicine/statins/**

Information on healthy living such as improving your diet, stopping smoking: 🌐 **https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/**

For more information about the REPRIEVE Study you can visit: 🌐 **www.reprievetrial.org**

For further discussion on the use of statins please speak to your clinician or GP.