

Living Well with Diabetes

Statin drugs lower your risk of heart attack and stroke

Did you know?

- Heart disease is the #1 killer in the United States.
- People with diabetes are twice as likely to have a heart attack as those without diabetes.
- 84 % of people over the age of 65 with diabetes will die of a heart attack or stroke.

Why do heart attacks and strokes happen?

Heart attacks and strokes happen because a substance, known as plaque, builds up in the blood vessels. Plaque is caused by inflammation and too much cholesterol in the blood vessels. This causes blood flow to slow down, leading to a blockage or rupture in the blood vessel. Having high blood sugar can make inflammation worse.

Studies done in countries around the world show the **TOP 4** risk factors for heart disease and stroke are:

- 1.) High cholesterol
- 2.) Smoking
- 3.) Emotional stress
- 4.) Diabetes

Other risk factors include high blood pressure, abdominal obesity, and family history.

What can you do to protect yourself from heart disease and stroke?

The steps you can take to lower your risk include:

- Eat fruits and vegetables every day.
- Stay physically active and get regular exercise.
- Limit alcoholic drinks to no more than 1 drink a day for women and 2 drinks a day for men.
- Keep your blood sugars as close to normal as possible.
- Consider taking a statin drug.

How do statins help?

There are 3 ways that statins help to protect you from heart disease and stroke:

- 1.) Statins lower the amount of cholesterol that's produced by the liver.
- 2.) Statins reduce inflammation in the arteries.
- 3.) Statins stabilize plaques to keep them from rupturing.

In clinical trials statins reduced the risk of heart attack, stroke, and death by about 25 %. This means that 1 out of 4 people will NOT die from a heart attack or stroke because they are taking a statin. For people with diabetes who take a statin, the number is 1 out of 5.

What are the side effects from taking a statin drug?

Most patients tolerate statin drugs with little or no side effect. Those who do experience side effects report some muscle aches and pains, and feelings of fatigue.

What's the bottom line?

- Taking a statin drug is one of the easiest and most affordable ways you can lower your risk of heart attack and stroke.
- It's easier to keep your blood vessels healthy than to reverse a blockage after it happens.
- Statin drugs, together with making healthy lifestyle choices, are an important part of keeping your blood vessels healthy and clear.
- Kaiser Permanente doctors, along with other clinical experts nationally, recommend statins for most patients over the age of 40 who have diabetes.