



# Blackrock Medical Clinic

## Lipid Lowering Medication

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### Introduction

The most common and effective lipid lowering medication is the 'statin' tablet. It is a safe, effective, and well tolerated treatment. Other medications such as ezetimibe may be used for additional effect in some cases. There are new medications such as PCSK9i and Bempedoic acid, but they are not widely available.

### Satins

#### How they work

Statins work by reducing the production of cholesterol in the liver while increasing its clearance. They can normally reduce LDL cholesterol by 40%.

#### Types

The most common statins are Rosuvastatin, Atorvastatin, Pravastatin and Simvastatin. Rosuvastatin and Atorvastatin can be taken at any time of day whereas Pravastatin and Simvastatin are better taken in the evening.

### What tests do I need?

Normally you will be starting a Statin because of cholesterol test. This is normally repeated at 3 months and 1 year after initiation along with a liver function test to assess effectiveness and to make sure the liver has not been affected.

### What is the target?

In primary prevention (where you have no previous heart disease) there is no specific target. We aim for at least a 40% reduction in LDL cholesterol. In secondary prevention (where you have had previous heart disease) an aggressive target will be set by your cardiologist.

### Side effects

Most people that take a statin have no effects or only minor ones. You should read the patient information leaflet that comes with the medication. Like most medications, common side effects reported are tummy upset, headaches, rashes etc. Rarely people can get a problem which leads to muscle pains. Where muscle pains are reported, and it is examined, more than 90% of the time it has nothing to do with the medication. We may do a blood test to check this.

### Dos and Don'ts

Do tell us if you have unexpected muscle pains or symptoms.

Don't take if you have active liver disease.

Don't eat or drink grapefruit if you are on Atorvastatin or Simvastatin.

Do check any other medications to make sure they don't interact. Some medications can increase the effective dose of the statin and so it may need to be adjusted. The most common would-be Amlodipine (for blood pressure) and Simvastatin.

### Ezetimibe

Ezetimibe is almost always prescribed along with a statin to boost its effect. It works by inhibiting cholesterol absorption from the gut and increasing clearance at the liver normally reducing LDL cholesterol by about 20%. It has a similar side effect profile to statins and is very well tolerated. It can come as a separate tablet or sometimes in a combination tablet with the statin.

## Conclusion

Heart disease is a leading cause of death and ill health. Cholesterol can account for up to half of the risk and we have good tools for reducing it that are well tolerated.