

Do You Need To Take A Cholesterol-Lowering Drug?

The new heart guidelines identify four groups of people who can benefit from cholesterol-lowering statin drugs, such as atorvastatin (*Lipitor*) and rosuvastatin (*Crestor*). That includes people with:

- A history of heart attack, stroke, or other forms of cardiovascular disease.
- Diabetes (between ages 40 and 75).
- An LDL (bad) cholesterol level of 190 mg/dl or higher.
- A 7.5 percent or higher risk of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 10 years based on a formula developed by the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology.

Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs says that for people in the first three groups, the benefits of statins outweigh the risks, including leg and back pain and, more rarely, serious liver or kidney damage.

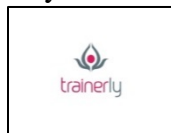
But their Best Buy Drug experts think that the cutoff for the fourth group may be too low. They point out that someone with a 10-year cardiovascular risk of 7.5 percent who takes a statin is likely to lower his risk to only 6 percent, which may not be enough to offset possible side effects.

Bottom line. The closer your risk is to 7.5 percent, the more you should focus on lifestyle changes before resorting to drugs. If you opt for a statin, the best choices for most people are the generics atorvastatin and simvastatin. They are safe and effective for most people, and cost a fraction of the price of brand-name drugs.

If you have any particular questions or would like to discuss your personal fitness goals, please schedule a free consultation.

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