What Are Cholesterol-Lowering Medications?

Cholesterol is part of a healthy body. But too much cholesterol in your blood can be harmful. Most heart attacks and many strokes are caused by a buildup of plaque in the inner walls of your arteries. The arteries become clogged and narrowed, which reduces blood flow. If a blood clot forms and blocks blood flow to your heart, it causes a heart attack. If a blood clot blocks an artery leading to or in the brain, a stroke occurs.

You can help prevent a heart attack or stroke by working with your healthcare team to reduce your cholesterol and other risk factors. Treatment often includes healthy eating, physical activity and medication.

What medication may I be prescribed?

There are many types of medications that can lower blood cholesterol levels.

LDL-lowering medications

Some medications that can lower LDL cholesterol levels include:

- **Statins** lower LDL by helping the liver make less cholesterol. They are often the first medication used to lower LDL cholesterol.
- **Cholesterol absorption inhibitors** prevent cholesterol from being absorbed in the intestines. They are the most common non-statin medications used to lower LDL cholesterol.
- **PCSK9 inhibitors** help the liver remove more LDL from the blood.
- **ACLY inhibitors** help the liver make less cholesterol. They may be used with other cholesterol medications to help lower LDL even more.
- **Bile acid sequestrants** help the intestines to remove more cholesterol by binding bile acids.

Triglyceride-lowering medications

Medications that can lower triglycerides may also slightly lower LDL. Some include:

- **Fibrates** are especially good at lowering triglycerides. They may also slightly lower LDL cholesterol.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids** help lower high triglycerides in the blood. These require a prescription and are not the same as fish oil supplements.
- **Niacin (nicotinic acid)** is a B vitamin that can lower triglycerides by reducing how much fat the liver makes. It may also raise HDL and mildly lower LDL. Take it only if prescribed.
- **ApoC-III inhibitors** lower triglycerides by helping the body remove fats from the blood. They are used only for people with familial chylomicronemia syndrome.

Dietary supplements are not recommended to lower cholesterol. They may interact with medications. Tell your healthcare professional about any supplements you take.

Your healthcare professional will help you choose the medications that are right for you. Some people may need more than one medication. Take your medication as

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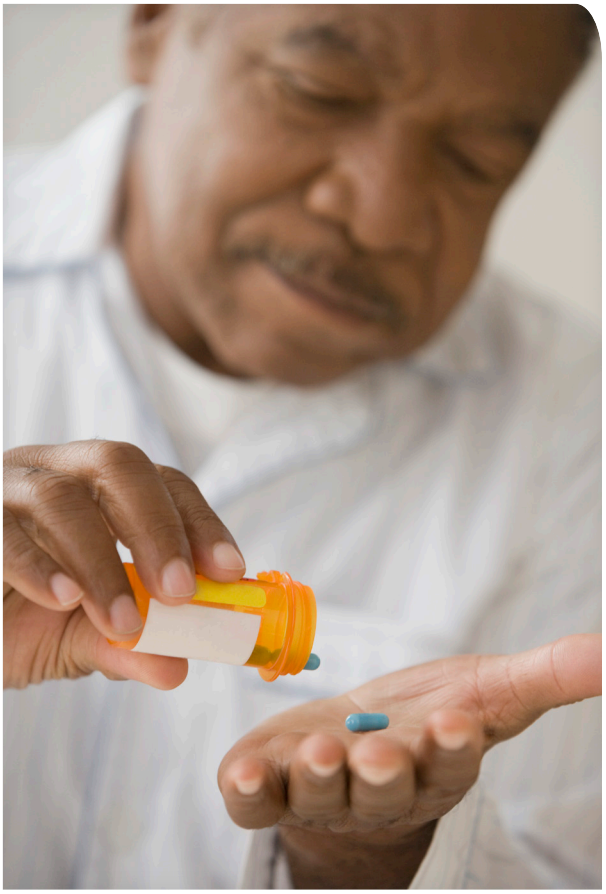
directed and tell your healthcare professional if you have side effects. Do not stop taking your medication without talking to them first.

If medication cost is a concern, tell your healthcare team. They may suggest a lower-cost option or help you find patient assistance programs. These programs make medications available to low-income, uninsured and under-resourced people.

How do I know if my medicine is working?

Your healthcare professional will test your blood cholesterol levels as needed to check your progress.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

1. Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721) or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
2. Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-News for heart patients and their families at **HeartInsight.org**.
3. Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **SupportNetwork.heart.org**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down questions for the next time you see your healthcare professional.

For example:

How often should I have my cholesterol checked?

Should I avoid any foods or other medications?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk of heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/AnswersByHeart** to learn more.

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