

# Statins may reduce risk of cataracts

CHICAGO —

Statins, the cholesterol-lowering drugs taken by millions of Americans, might also reduce the risk of cataracts, a preliminary study suggests.

Adults who took statins were found to be 45 percent less likely to develop the most common type of age-related cataracts.

Other researchers warned that something other than statins might explain the results and that the study does not prove cause-and-effect.

The results were a surprise because of earlier concerns that some cholesterol medications might increase the risk of cataracts, a common clouding-over of the lens of the eye that can lead to poor vision and blindness. In fact, several cholesterol drugs never made it to market because of those concerns.

The study, published in a recent *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, involved 1,299 Beaver Dam, Wis., residents who were followed for five years.

Nuclear cataracts — which affect the eye lens nucleus — were diagnosed in more than 200 participants, or in about 12 percent of statin users, compared with 17 percent of nonusers. After factoring in the participants' age, the researchers concluded statin users were about 45 percent less likely to develop nuclear cataracts.

Statins, which are taken by millions of Americans and include such top-selling drugs as Lipitor, Pravachol and Zocor, dramatically lower levels of artery-clogging bad cholesterol.

Statins have also been reported to have antioxidant benefits and to attack inflammation. And both oxygen damage to the body and inflammation are believed to

be related to cataracts.

Cataracts affect more than 20 million Americans and are a major cause of vision impairment and blindness worldwide. Most are associated with aging; more than half of U.S. adults in their 70s and older are affected.

Cataracts are usually treated with surgery, typically an outpatient procedure in which the clouded lens is replaced with an artificial lens.

But Debra Schaumberg, an eye specialist at Harvard's Brigham and Women's Hospital, cautioned against overinterpreting the results.

"While I agree with the authors that the potential for a relatively benign and inexpensive preventive therapy for cataracts would have substantial public health importance, I think it is still far too early to assign any such role to statin medications," she said. — AP

## Metrowest-area ambulance transports slated for heart-attack study

Emerson Hospital Emergency Medical Services (EMS) will participate this summer in a nationwide cardiac research study for a drug that could potentially save the lives of patients with threatening or ongoing heart attacks each year.

The Immediate Myocardial Metabolic Enhancement During Initial Assessment and Treatment in Emergency Care (IMMEDIATE) Trial will be conducted by Emerson Hospital in association with Tufts-New England Medical Center

Institute for Clinical Research and Health Policy Studies. The trial will determine if an intravenous solution of glucose, insulin and potassium, known as GIK, can reduce the likelihood of death from a heart attack.

The trial will also determine whether GIK can prevent threatening heart attacks from occurring, and whether GIK can decrease serious complications and death for heart attacks as they occur.

Previous studies suggest intravenous GIK given during a heart attack may reduce

irregular heartbeats, slow the progression from unstable angina pectoris to heart attack, limit the size of the heart attack, increase the benefit from coronary reperfusion treatments, and reduce mortality. The greatest benefit occurs when GIK is used as early as possible in the course of acute coronary syndromes, when risk is highest. Thus, the IMMEDIATE study will begin GIK while en route in the ambulance.

All heart attack patients transported by Emerson EMS, who are at least 30 years old and have positive electrocardiogram find-

ings, may be eligible for the study. Patients who are unconscious and have signs of significant heart failure or kidney failure will not be included in the study.

A community consultation meeting, including a 20-minute presentation on the study and a question-and-answer session, will be held July 12 at 11 a.m. at the Harvey Wheeler Community Center, 1276 Main St., West Concord. For more information, call the Concord Regional Coordinating Center at 508-328-5906 or visit [www.IMMEDIATETrial.com](http://www.IMMEDIATETrial.com).

## Minuteman SHINE Program volunteers honored

Fifteen volunteer Serving Health Information Needs of Elders (SHINE) counselors in Minuteman Senior Service's SHINE Program recently received the President's Volunteer Service Award from President Bush and the Presidents' Council on Service and Civic Participation. The counselors received a certificate, congratulatory letter from the White House and a gold, silver or bronze pin embossed with the presidential seal. For more than 500 hours of service a gold pin was awarded to Ruthann Covino of Burlington, Cindy

Hickey and Jennifer Querisio of Somerville, Janet Hand and Pat Lieberman of Arlington and Caryn Eichenbaum of Woburn. For 250 to 500 hours of service, Barbara Hooper of Wilmington, John DeCata of Woburn, Rhoda Neidorf and Rose Lerner of Lexington, and Virginia LeMire of Lincoln received a silver pin. For 100 to 249 hours of counseling a bronze pin was awarded to Eileen Ralske and Bob Selling of Acton, Mary Jane Costello of Westford, Nancy Barkman of Burlington and Jini Vockel of Boxborough.



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