Diabetes Mellitus, Heart Disease, and Statins

What is the relationship between Diabetes and Heart Disease?

- Heart disease is the most common cause of death in people with diabetes.
- Even if your cholesterol levels are normal, diabetes itself is a risk factor for heart disease.
- People with diabetes are at least twice as likely to have heart disease or stroke than people without diabetes.
- High cholesterol and high blood sugar levels can increase the risk of these serious health conditions, such as heart disease, stroke, or peripheral arterial disease (decreased blood flow to a limb).

What can you do to decrease your risk of heart disease?

- Work with your healthcare team in controlling blood sugar.
- Follow a diet as recommended, and try to optimize your weight and exercise regularly.
- Adding a statin to your medications has been shown to reduce your risk of heart disease, even if your blood cholesterol levels are normal.

What are Statins?

- Statins are cholesterol-lowering medicines that have been widely used over the last 30 years and work by reducing the production of cholesterol in your liver.
- People with diabetes have a higher risk of ASCVD even if their LDL cholesterol is normal.
- Statins help reduce the risk for heart attack, stroke, and death in people with diabetes.

Is a statin recommended for people with diabetes?

- A statin is recommended for adults 40 to 75 years of age with diabetes.
- Discuss the benefits and risks of taking a statin with your healthcare team if you are:
  - Older than 75 years of age with diabetes
  - 20 to 39 years of age with a long duration of diabetes (10 years or more of having type 2 diabetes, or 20 years or more of having type 1 diabetes) or have diabetes complications, such as kidney disease, eye disease, nerve damage, or blood vessel disease.

What are the side effects of statins?

- Statins are cholesterol-lowering medicines that have been used safely for many years. A few people develop mild side effects including:
  - Muscle aches
  - Liver enzyme elevations
- People with risk factors for diabetes may develop diabetes sooner, but statins do not cause diabetes. If you experience any side-effects with a statin, please contact your healthcare team.