

Facts for Women to Know About Cholesterol, Triglycerides and Heart Disease

- More women die from heart disease than all forms of cancer and other diseases combined (including breast cancer).
- Particles that carry cholesterol and triglycerides can build-up inside artery walls (forming plaques) and can lead to heart disease and stroke. Elevated triglycerides can also lead to inflammation of the pancreas.
- All women over age 20 should have cholesterol and triglyceride levels tested approximately every 5 years, or at a younger age and/or more often based upon family history of cardiovascular disease or other cardiovascular risk factors.
- If you are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about the risks and benefits of medications to lower cholesterol and/or triglycerides while pregnant.
- Women with high cholesterol or triglycerides, early menopause (<age 40), high blood pressure, diabetes, pregnancy-related diabetes or high blood pressure, polycystic ovary syndrome, autoimmune disease (such as lupus or rheumatoid arthritis), chronic kidney disease or a family history of heart disease or stroke are at an even greater risk for heart disease or stroke.
- Heart disease and stroke risk increase after menopause (surgical or natural) making it important to diagnose and treat all risk factors.
- Heart-healthy eating (low sugar, fiber-rich whole grains, fish, lean meat, legumes, vegetables and fruits), plus exercise and weight control are all very important in lowering your risk for heart disease and stroke.
- Statins and/or other medications may be recommended to lower your risk of heart disease and stroke based on your cholesterol and triglyceride levels and other risk factors. Talk to your healthcare provider about this.



Myths vs. Facts

Myth	Fact
Statins cause muscle damage.	Muscle damage from statins is very rare, and can be reversed. Talk to your healthcare provider if you develop muscle aches or weakness while on a statin. There are other medications which can be used for individuals who cannot take a statin due to muscle symptoms.
Statins cause diabetes.	Statins increase blood sugar levels in some people, especially if their blood sugar is high already. Diabetes may occur in this situation, but this can often be prevented with diet and exercise. The benefits of statins outweigh the risks in individuals with increased blood sugar.
Statins damage your liver.	Statins rarely cause liver problems so liver enzymes don't need to be tested routinely in statin-treated patients. Talk to your healthcare provider if you are worried about your liver or if you have weakness or fatigue, stomach pain or dark-colored urine.
Statins have lots of drug interactions.	Statins may interact with some over-the counter medications, herbal agents and prescription medications. Make sure you tell your healthcare provider about all prescription and over-the-counter medications and supplements you take.