



# STATINS

## A guide for stroke patients

The information in this leaflet is intended for general guidance. If your doctor has given you different advice, follow those instructions.

### What are statins for?

Cholesterol is a type of fatty substance in your blood. When cholesterol is present in excess it can build up on the walls of the blood vessels and block blood flow. Statins are medicines used to reduce the amount of cholesterol in the blood

If you have had a stroke or a mini-stroke, taking a statin can lower your chance of having another stroke, even if your cholesterol level is normal to start with.

### Names

Examples of statins are ATORVASTATIN (*Lipitor*<sup>®</sup>), FLUVASTATIN, PRAVASTATIN, ROSUVASTATIN (*Crestor*<sup>®</sup>) and SIMVASTATIN (*Zocor*<sup>®</sup>).

### How do they work?

Some cholesterol comes from our diet. Cholesterol is also produced in the liver, mainly during sleep. Statins work by reducing your body's production of cholesterol in the liver. Statins should be used together with a low fat diet.

### How should I take the tablets?

Swallow the number of tablets or capsules prescribed with a glass of water, preferably at bedtime (ATORVASTATIN and ROSUVASTATIN may be taken at any time of day). If you find it difficult to swallow your medication, speak to your doctor or pharmacist. If you have been prescribed SIMVASTATIN or ATORVASTATIN, you should avoid drinking grapefruit juice or eating grapefruit.

**What if I forget a dose?**

Do not worry. Take the next dose when it is due. DO NOT double up the dose.

### **How will I know if the tablets are working?**

You will not notice anything different. Your doctor may take a cholesterol level to check that the amount of cholesterol in your blood is reducing satisfactorily.

### **How long will I have to take the tablets for?**

Probably for many years. Do not stop taking them unless your doctor tells you to do so.

### **Are there any side effects?**

Side effects with statins are rare and they are usually mild and short-lived. Statins may cause stomach upset and headache. Rarely, statins may cause liver problems and allergic reactions. Your doctor will probably do a blood test to check that your liver is working properly before you start taking a statin and during treatment.

***If you experience unexplained muscle weakness, muscle tenderness or muscle pain, tell your doctor immediately, especially if you also have a temperature or feel unwell.***

### **Can I have other medicines?**

There are some medicines that interact with statins. These include other medicines used to lower cholesterol, some medicines used to treat infections, ciclosporin and warfarin. Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any new medicines, supplements or herbal products.

### **Can I drink alcohol?**

Alcohol intake should be kept to a minimum. If in doubt, you should ask your doctor.

### **How do I find out more?**

The information in this leaflet is limited. If you would like more information, see the patient information leaflet provided with your medication. You can also ask your doctor or pharmacist for further information.

### **For further information phone:**

01603 286 286 and ask for the '*Pharmacy Helpline*' between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday to Friday.

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