

What your doctor might not have told you about cholesterol lowering drugs....

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With all the awareness of cardiovascular disease during February heart month I am always floored when I see television ads urging us to “ask our doctor about...*fill in the blank*...drug” followed by the announcer listing the dreadful side effects at auctioneer speed. One popular drug many are taking is Lipitor, one of the “statins”. This cholesterol lowering drug is manufactured by the pharmaceutical giant Merck. *Lovastatin* not surprisingly was first isolated from nature in the tree fungus *Aspergillus terreus* which contains up to 2.8% lovastatin. The red yeast *Monascus purpureus*, found growing in rice, has also been found to contain a varying amount of lovastatin.

The action of statin drugs is to inhibit HMG-CoA reductase. This is a liver enzyme that synthesizes cholesterol. Most of the cholesterol circulating in the blood is manufactured in your own liver. When the liver’s cholesterol production is “shut off” by a statin drug the liver then takes “bad” LDL-cholesterol out of circulation for excretion into bile and stool. The most efficient time for the liver to do this is during the night. This is why it is recommended that you take your statin drug before bed.

The word is slowly getting out about statin drugs creating deficiencies of Co-enzyme Q10, also known as ubiquinone. CoQ10 metabolism is also blocked by inhibition of HMG-CoA reductase enzyme. Serious side effects can

result. Cardiomyopathy, angina and even congestive heart failure can be the result of long term depletion of CoQ10. CoQ10 is a key nutrient for

mitochondrial energy production in cells. Heart muscle cells have high concentrations of mitochondria and are very sensitive to CoQ10 depletion. Ironically statin drugs are prescribed to lower one kind of cardiovascular risk and yet can increase other kinds of risk to your heart. If you are on a statin drug and have not been advised to also take CoQ10, you should consult with a physician to devise a CoQ10 supplementation plan that is right for you.

With all the focus on

cholesterol you might think it’s the only risk factor for heart disease.

Heart disease is still a leading cause of death for both men and women. Statin drugs have been around for 30 years and yet there are still some 81 million people in the USA suffering with some form of heart disease. What are we overlooking?

In fact the integrity of our vascular system depends on more of our diet and lifestyle than just what results in cholesterol. Chronic inflammation is the root cause of many diseases including cardiovascular disease. Chronic inflammation is both treatable and preventable. The fats in our industrialized food supply are skewed towards omega-6 fatty

acids which are pro-inflammatory, with grain-fed beef being the worst. Highly processed convenience foods are lacking in useful vitamins and fiber which leads to other inflammatory factors and incomplete bowel elimination of LDL-cholesterol and other undesirable metabolic byproducts. Low-fat, high carbohydrate foods contribute to diabetes and ironically, production of fat and cholesterol. And of course smoking and excessive consumption of alcohol increase inflammation and decrease the effectiveness of the liver.

Lifestyle solutions include eating freshly prepared, whole, non-processed foods, meat choices such as grass fed beef, wild salmon and tripling the amount of fresh vegetables in our daily diets. Avoid sweets, soft drinks, and high carbohydrates in ready to eat processed foods. In addition we all need to drink water without chlorine, get outside for fresh air and perform daily moderate exercise. Finally, do whatever you need to lower your everyday stress in life and to allow yourself to experience the joy of being alive.



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