

Mission In Motion
Health & Wellness
September 14, 2012

News from the Blues
Share the Wellness
Fall Tip

Conquering Cholesterol with Statins

To help lower your cholesterol, start making a few healthier lifestyles changes, such as: Beginning an exercise program, reducing your fat intake and quitting smoking.

HDL (high-density lipoprotein) picks up cholesterol as it circulates in the bloodstream and brings it back to the liver for reprocessing or excretion. It is what some refer to as the "good" cholesterol. LDL (low-density lipoprotein) is the "bad" cholesterol, which is the amount of cholesterol fat circulating in your blood that often is deposited in the artery walls. These deposits can lead to atherosclerosis, heart disease and stroke. Your doctor may recommend a statin to reduce you levels of LDL.

Statins Do Double-Duty

If your doctor decides to prescribe you a statin, it can help decrease the buildup of artery-clogging plaque.

Statins work to lower cholesterol in two ways. First, they put the brakes on an enzyme that controls cholesterol production. They also enhance your liver's ability to remove LDL cholesterol that's already in the bloodstream. In addition to lowering cholesterol, statins reduce C-reactive protein (CRP) in your bloodstream. CRP is another contributor to heart disease.

Consistency is the Name of the Game

If your doctor determines that you should take a statin, follow these suggestions:

- Take them in the evening. Statins typically are taken at dinner or at bedtime. That's because the body makes more cholesterol at night than during the day.
- Stick with it. While you may not feel any different, your cholesterol level will begin to drop in as little as two weeks. Your doctor will most likely wish to check your cholesterol levels again six to eight weeks after starting the statins.
- Report any continual discomfort. As your body adjusts to a new drug, you may experience slight gas, upset stomach, constipation or cramping. If these conditions continue or worsen, call your doctor.
- Teamwork. Make sure you feel comfortable talking with your doctor about your cholesterol levels and that you understand all the directions. Follow your plan carefully; your medication won't have a chance to work if you don't take it as directed.

During September's National Cholesterol Awareness Month, BCBSTX highlights ways to boost good cholesterol levels and improve heart health both online and through our social media. You can join the discussion by visiting:

- On its Facebook and Twitter pages, BCBSTX is featuring cholesterol-themed weekly tips, quizzes and engaging questions. Tips and information are also offered in Spanish on our Latino Facebook pages.
- Also on the BCBSTX Facebook page, a new "Cholesterol Myths vs. Facts" tab. Look for common misconceptions – along with the true story – about cholesterol.
- Our public website and Blue Access for MembersSM feature new articles on cholesterol risk factors, tests and levels, nutrition labels and more.

Sources: National Lipid Association, American Heart Association