

**Patient Information**

**Nephrology Department**

**Cholesterol lowering medicines (statins)**

**Contact Information**

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(Available Monday – Friday, 8:30am until 2pm)

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**Examples**

The following are examples of the brand names of statins:

* Simvastatin
* Atorvastatin
* Pravastatin
* Fluvastatin

**What are statins and what do they do?**

Statins are a medication which is used to lower the levels of cholesterol in the blood. Having too much cholesterol in your blood can put you at risk of heart disease or a stroke.

When you have kidney problems it is particularly important to maintain a low blood cholesterol level. This is because people with kidney disease are already at a higher risk of having problems with their heart, developing heart disease, suffering from a heart attack or stroke.

**Why have I been prescribed a statin?**

Your doctor has prescribed a statin because the level of cholesterol in your blood is higher than it should be. Hopefully by taking a statin your cholesterol will fall to the recommended level.

A healthy low-fat diet and exercise is also important and you should try to follow this.

**How should I take my statin tablets?**

Statins are normally taken at night. Your doctor will monitor your cholesterol and adjust the dose of your medication as required. Always follow the instructions given to you about the number of tablets to take.

**Will need to have tests and be monitored whilst I am taking a statin?**

Whilst taking a statin you will need to have regular blood tests so that your cholesterol level can be monitored. Your liver function will also be monitored. Occasionally taking a statin can cause a change in the enzymes of the liver. Blood tests are needed every 3 months when you start taking a statin but once you have settled on to the treatment you can have blood tests less frequently (every six to twelve months).

**Do statins have any side effects?**

At first statins can make you feel sick but this often stops after the first few days. If this is a problem for you please inform your doctor.

Some of the side effects that you might notice for a short time after you start taking your statins are:

* Headaches
* Sleeping problems
* Rash
* Pains in your chest
* Unexplained hair loss

Please inform your doctor if you have any strange side effects from taking your statin.

**Special cautions when taking statins**

Tell your doctor immediately if you suffer from any of the following:

* On rare occasions statins can cause muscle pain or weak muscles.
* On rare occasions statins can cause problems with your liver. This can cause you to feel generally unwell or your skin to turn yellow.

**Do statins interact with any other medications or food/drinks?**

If you are taking Simvastatin you must avoid drinking grapefruit juice as it can increase the risk of side effects.

You should only take tablets which are prescribed for you by your doctor and check with your pharmacist before taking any new or over the counter medications.

**Further information**

Further information about your medication can be found in the patient information leaflet found in the tablet box or on the container.