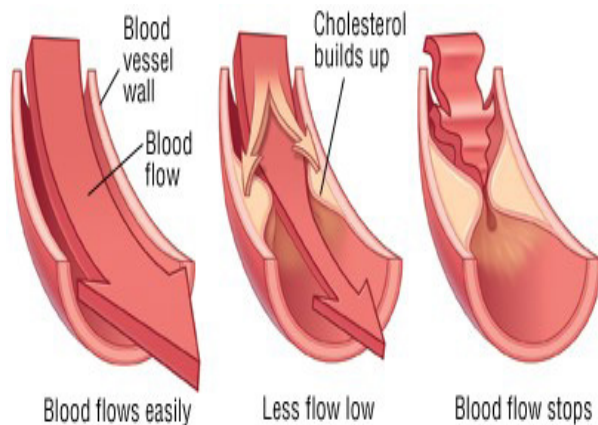


## Diabetes, Heart Disease and Stroke

When you have Diabetes you are more at risk of heart disease and stroke, this is also called cardiovascular disease or coronary disease.

### **What is Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)?**

CVD describes disease of the heart and blood vessels caused by the hardening and narrowing of the arteries (atherosclerosis). When blood flow is reduced or blocked in the blood vessels that feed the heart and brain it can result in a heart attack or stroke.



Accessed from [https://www.health.harvard.edu/a\\_to\\_z/high-cholesterol-hypercholesterolemia-a-to-z](https://www.health.harvard.edu/a_to_z/high-cholesterol-hypercholesterolemia-a-to-z)

### Why I am more at risk of developing CVD if I have diabetes?

High blood glucose levels

If you have even slightly high blood sugar levels for a period of time, your blood vessels can start to get damaged.

### High cholesterol

Cholesterol is a type of fat in the blood which is essential for your body to work. Having too much bad cholesterol (called low density lipoprotein or LDL) in your blood can cause fatty deposits (plaques) to build up in your arteries which can lead to narrow or blocked arteries.

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/enjoy-food/eating-with-diabetes/managing-other-medical-conditions/cholesterol-and-diabetes>



### High blood pressure

Not only does the blood struggle to flow through the blood vessels, but over time narrowing of the blood vessels (atherosclerosis) makes the walls of your blood vessels more rigid and less flexible. This can lead to high blood pressure (also called hypertension) or make high blood pressure worse.

High blood pressure puts extra strain on your blood vessels too. That's on top of the strain from high cholesterol and high blood sugar.

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/managing-your-diabetes/blood-pressure>

### How to reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke

Attending your annual diabetes review with your GP and practice nurse and having your HbA1c, Blood pressure and Cholesterol checked.

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/managing-your-diabetes/15-healthcare-essentials>

### Reducing weight to a healthy weight

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/enjoy-food/eating-with-diabetes/managing-other-medical-conditions/eating-for-diabetes-and-heart-health>

<https://acemyweightmatters.org/home>

Tel 0800 022 4524

<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health>

### **Giving up smoking**

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/life-with-diabetes/help-with-giving-up-smoking>

<https://www.essexwellbeingsservice.co.uk/lifestyle/stop-smoking>

**Tel 0300 303 9988**

### **Increasing Activity levels**

<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health>

### **Medication**

- Taking a cholesterol lowering medication, usually a statin, if recommended and prescribed by your Doctor or Diabetes Practitioner.
- Current NICE clinical guidance recommends statin therapy for people with Type 2 diabetes who have a 10% or greater 10 year risk of developing cardiovascular disease.
- For people with Type 1 diabetes statin therapy is recommended if you are over the age of 40, or have had diabetes for more than 10 years, or have established kidney damage, or have other CVD risk factors, such as high blood pressure.

### **How do statins work?**

- Statins reduce the level of LDL (bad cholesterol) and reduce your risk of developing heart attacks and stroke.
- Statins work by blocking the action of a certain chemical (enzyme) which is needed to make cholesterol in the liver and leads to reduced cholesterol levels in the blood.

### **What do I need to know when starting a statin?**

- It's important to take your medication regularly as prescribed. Most statins are taken before bed as this is when most of your cholesterol is produced.
- You should avoid eating grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice if you are taking some statins (simvastatin, atorvastatin and lovastatin). A chemical in the grapefruit can increase the level of statin in the blood stream which can make side effects from the statin more likely.
- Various other medicines may interfere with statins for example some antibiotics and ciclosporin. If you are prescribed another medicine, remind your doctor or pharmacist that you are on a statin.

### **Where statins are not recommended**

- Severe liver problems, planning a pregnancy, if you are pregnant or if you are breast feeding.
- Statins are very safe medicines so can be used alongside most other medication and medical conditions.

### **Pregnancy and breastfeeding**

- Statins should not be taken in pregnancy and whilst breastfeeding because it may cause abnormalities to the baby and its development before birth.
- It is important to take contraception if you are on a statin. It is best to stop taking a statin at least 3 months before you start trying for a baby.
- If you become pregnant whilst taking a statin stop taking it immediately and tell your doctor.

### **What are the possible side effects of taking statins?**

- Most people who take a statin have no side effects, or only minor ones. Please read the information leaflet that comes with your medicine for a full list of possible side effects.
- Possible side effects include headache, pins and needles, tummy (abdominal) pain, bloating, diarrhoea, feeling sick (nausea) and a rash.
- Rare side effects of statins are a severe form of muscle inflammation. Tell your doctor or diabetes practitioner if you have unexpected muscle pain, tenderness, cramps or weakness.
- Before you start taking a statin you will have a blood test to check your liver is working properly. After starting treatment you will be asked to have a blood test within 3 months and again at 12 months. The aim, if possible is to reduce your total cholesterol to less than 5.0 mmol/l and LDL cholesterol to less than 2.0mmol/l

### **Contact Us**

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