

High and moderate-potency cholesterol-lowering medications increase diabetes risk

Elderly patients prescribed certain cholesterol-lowering medications such as Lipitor[®], Crestor[®], and Zocor[®] may be at increased risk of developing diabetes.

What does this mean?

- Patients treated with more potent statins – a type of cholesterol-lowering medication - were more likely to develop new diabetes than patients who were prescribed lower potency statins.
- Lipitor[®], Crestor[®], and Zocor[®] were associated with an increased risk of diabetes compared to Pravachol[®]; approximately 1 of every 100 patients who are treated with one of these drugs instead of Pravachol[®] will develop diabetes
- Lower doses of Crestor[®] were not associated with an increased risk of diabetes

Recommendations

- ✓ Be aware that higher potency statin medications may be associated with an increased risk of diabetes.
- ✓ You may want to consult your physician or health care practitioner about the risks associated with statins like Lipitor[®], Zocor[®] and Crestor[®].

How do we know this?

The ODPRN examined healthcare records of patients age 66 years or older residing in Ontario, Canada. The research was conducted to look at the risk of developing diabetes among patients newly treated with five types of statins (Lipitor[®], Crestor[®], Zocor[®], Lescol[®] and Mevacor[®]). Each of these five statins were compared to Pravachol[®], a lower potency statin previously shown to be beneficial in regulating blood sugar levels. Compared to the patients who took Pravachol[®], patients taking Lipitor[®], Crestor[®] and Zocor[®] experienced an increased risk of acquiring diabetes; approximately 1 of every 100 patients treated for one year with Lipitor[®], Crestor[®] or Zocor[®] instead of Pravachol[®] will develop diabetes. The risk of acquiring diabetes for patients taking Crestor[®] was not increased with lower doses. There was no significant increase in risk among those patients who were prescribed other low potency statins (Lescol[®] or Mevacor[®]).

Carter A, Gomes T, Camacho X, Juurlink DN, Shah B, Mamdani MM. Assessment of the Risk of Incident Diabetes Among Patients treated with Statins: A Population-Based Study. *BMJ*. Published Online First: 24 May 2013.

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