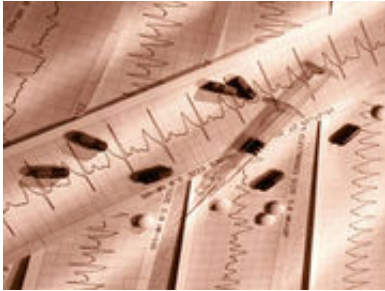


Too few Americans are taking needed cholesterol-lowering drugs: CDC

3 December 2015



Only half who should be using medications to help prevent heart disease.

(HealthDay)—Nearly half of American adults who should be taking cholesterol-lowering drugs don't, federal government researchers report.

They also found that blacks and Hispanics were less likely than whites to take medications that lower levels of "bad" LDL cholesterol.

"Nearly 800,000 people die in the U.S. each year from cardiovascular diseases—that's one in every three deaths—and high cholesterol continues to be a major risk factor," said Carla Mercado, a scientist in the division for heart disease and stroke prevention at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"This study reveals opportunities to reduce existing [racial] disparities through targeted patient education and cholesterol management programs," she said in a CDC news release.

The CDC study team analyzed national data from 2005 to 2014 and found that nearly 37 percent of U.S. adults—more than 78 million people aged 21 and older—were eligible to take cholesterol-lowering medications or were already taking them.

Among these people, 55.5 percent were taking cholesterol-lowering medication, almost 47 percent

were making lifestyle changes to lower cholesterol, 37 percent were taking medication and making [lifestyle changes](#), and 35.5 percent were doing neither.

The study included all types of cholesterol-lowering drugs, but nearly 90 percent of those on medication were taking a statin, the researchers noted.

Of the almost 41 percent of men eligible for or already on [cholesterol medication](#), close to 53 percent were taking them. Among women, the figures were almost 33 percent and more than 58 percent, respectively.

Of the roughly 24 percent of Mexican-Americans eligible for or already on cholesterol medication, 47 percent were taking medications. The figures were 39.5 percent and 46 percent, respectively, among blacks, and more than 38 percent and 58 percent, respectively, among whites.

The lowest rate of taking recommended cholesterol medication (close to 6 percent) was among blacks who did not have a regular place for health care. The highest rate (80 percent) was among people who said they already adopted a heart-healthy lifestyle.

The study appears in the Dec. 4 issue of the CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

More information: The American Heart Association has more about [cholesterol](#).

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APA citation: Too few Americans are taking needed cholesterol-lowering drugs: CDC (2015, December 3) retrieved 21 August 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-12-americans-cholesterol-lowering-drugs-cdc.html>

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