

PAD patients on statins may have lower amputation, death risk

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People who have peripheral artery disease (PAD) and take cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins have a lower risk of amputation and death than PAD patients who don't take statins. And the higher the dose of statins, the lower the risks, according to research presented at the American Heart Association's Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology, Peripheral Vascular Disease 2016 Scientific Sessions.

"PAD, a narrowing of the peripheral arteries to the legs, stomach, arms and head, is the next cardiovascular epidemic. It is poorly recognized and not adequately treated compared to heart disease - and research is lacking on the optimal use of [statins](#) for PAD patients," said Shipra Arya, M.D., S.M., study lead author and assistant professor, division of vascular surgery at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta, Georgia.

Researchers studied health information and health status from the Veterans Affairs' database for more than 208,000 veterans with PAD. During an average 5.2 years of follow up, researchers identified those on statin medications (and the dose) around the time of PAD diagnosis and followed the veterans to assess their risk of amputation or death. Researchers classified patients into three groups - those taking high doses of statins, low to moderate statin doses and no statins.

The researchers found:

A 33 percent lower risk of amputation and 29 percent lower risk of death among PAD patients taking high doses of statins, compared to those taking no statins.

A 22 percent lower risk of [amputation](#) and death among PAD patients taking low to moderate doses of statins compared to PAD patients taking no statins.

"Ours is one of the largest population-based studies on PAD and suggests patients who have been diagnosed with PAD should be considered for placement on high dose statins upon diagnosis if they can tolerate it, along with other medical management, including smoking cessation, antiplatelet therapy and a walking program," said Arya who is also a staff physician at Atlanta V.A. Medical Center.

Provided by American Heart Association

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