

Cholesterol drug shown to reduce inflammation, other factors in patients

24 March 2017

Provided by American Physiological Society

Statin drugs are widely used to manage high cholesterol and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. But in a new review of more than 50 studies, researchers cite reductions in liver inflammation and improvements in other related factors as reasons why statins make good candidates for treating chronic liver disease. The article is published ahead of print in the *American Journal of Physiology—Gastrointestinal and Liver Physiology*.

Reducing cholesterol can have a positive effect on many chronic liver disorders, including non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and non-alcoholic steatohepatitis, as well as in biliary disorders. In some studies, the research team found that statins reduced inflammatory molecules that are typically elevated with liver disease and improved inflammation in the endothelium (cells that line the blood vessels). Statin use may also lead to:

- Decreased fibrosis (hardening or scarring of tissue),
- Less development of fatty liver,
- Slowed or halted spread of hepatitis C virus,
- Improvement of portal hypertension (high blood pressure in the liver's blood vessels),
- Destruction of existing liver tumor cells, and
- Reduced risk of developing liver cancer.

The researchers acknowledge that [statin drugs](#) can contribute to liver damage in some people, but for people with advanced [liver disease](#), "[s]tatins are cost-effective, generally well-tolerated by patients and the benefits of statin treatment in most patients outweigh their potential hepatotoxic risk."

More information: Robert Schierwagen et al. Rationale for the use of statins in liver disease, *American Journal of Physiology - Gastrointestinal and Liver Physiology* (2017). [DOI: 10.1152/ajpgi.00441.2016](#)

APA citation: Cholesterol drug shown to reduce inflammation, other factors in patients (2017, March 24) retrieved 26 July 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-03-cholesterol-drug-shown-inflammation-factors.html>

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