



Letter to the editor: The Pundit Speaks  
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## "Statins Not Needed in Healthy Adults "

In November of 2010, cardiologists at Johns Hopkins Hospital found that, among healthy adults, only those with measurable buildup of artery-hardening calcium would significantly benefit from statin treatment. Giving these strong drugs for "preventative-measures only" to healthy adults is not recommended. Hopkins investigators said, "Our results tell us that only those with calcium buildup in their arteries have a clear benefit from statin therapy. Those who are otherwise healthy and have no significant calcification should, with their physician, focus on aggressive lifestyle improvements instead of early initiation of statin medications." The popular cholesterol-lowering drugs, Lipitor and Crestor, lower cholesterol by blocking an enzyme in the liver and the six-year Hopkins study found that 75 percent of all heart attacks, strokes or heart-related deaths occurred in the 25 percent of participants who had the highest calcium buildup in their blood vessels. Hopkins researcher, Dr. Roger Blumenthal, said, "The statin drugs should not be approached like diet and exercise as a broadly based solution for preventing coronary heart disease." As many as five percent of people on statins develop serious side effects, such as muscle pain and liver damage, while one in 255 will develop diabetes. Further, a U.S. meta-analysis of 11 studies published in June of 2010 had revealed that statin treatments do not reduce the death rate among patients with high cholesterol but no history of heart disease. It appears that calcium scoring offers more predictive value for heart problems than does C-reactive protein (CRP). A 2011 study published in The Cochrane Library, concluded that statins reduced death rates but there was no evidence to justify their use in people at low risk of developing heart disease. In 2007, over 60 million Americans were taking cholesterol-lowering statin drugs. We must not forget that Pfizer's abandoned drug, tocetrapib, raised "good cholesterol" and lowered "bad cholesterol" but did not slow the progression of plaque buildup and it significantly raised blood pressure and increased the risk of death. Nor should we forget the words of experts, Dr. Steven Nissen of the Cleveland Clinic and Dr. Roger Blumenthal of Johns Hopkins, who have said, "although the drugs have been shown to reduce cholesterol, their manufacturers acknowledge that they've never been shown to prevent heart attacks or other life-threatening events." So, the controversy continues.

In the America that I love, we must remember that coronary heart disease remains the leading cause of death, responsible for one in five deaths among adults. We must not forget that a high cholesterol level is just one of dozens of risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Cholesterol is important for the synthesis of bile acids, sex hormones and vitamin D and it is an integral component of nerve cells. Proceed with caution and consult your doctor.

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