

Cholesterol-lowering drugs reduce risk of stroke, heart attack

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People whose cholesterol improved after one month on cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins reduced their risk of stroke and heart attack, according to research that will be presented at the American Academy of Neurology's 59th Annual Meeting in Boston.

The study enrolled 4,731 people within one to six months of having a stroke or transient ischemic attack, or mini-stroke, and with no history of heart disease. Half of the participants received the cholesterol-lowering drug atorvastatin and half received a placebo. The participants were then followed for an average of four and a half years.

For each 10-percent decrease in LDL, or low-density lipoprotein "bad" cholesterol, the risk of stroke was reduced by four percent and the risk of heart attack was reduced by seven percent. The average decrease in LDL cholesterol after one month on atorvastatin was 53 percent.

"These findings reinforce the importance of controlling cholesterol," said study author Pierre Amarenco, MD, of Denis Diderot University in Paris, France, and Fellow member of the American Academy of Neurology. "It's encouraging to see that reducing cholesterol so quickly can have positive long-term effects."

People with higher levels of HDL, or high-density lipoprotein "good" cholesterol, at the beginning of the study and after one month had a lower risk of stroke.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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