

Statins good for the heart and possibly infections: studies

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The same cholesterol-lowering statins taken by tens of millions worldwide to prevent cardiovascular disease may help fend off infections as well, new studies have found.

Authors of the research agreed more investigation was needed to say for sure whether statins best known for their interaction with cholesterol could be recommended as a treatment for infections such as pneumonia, sepsis or blood infections secondary to [organ transplants](#).

The studies were presented Monday at the 50th annual ICAAC (Interscience Conference on [Antimicrobial Agents](#) and Chemotherapy), the biggest global get-together on infectious disease. It is being held in Boston September 12-14.

A review of a Danish study of about 70,000 patients with pneumonia that included 7,000 who were on statins, found there was 31-percent lower mortality in the subset on statins compared to the others, said Dr. Reimar Thomsen, of Aarhus University Hospital in Denmark.

But the study did not look at a multifactorial bigger picture. For example the people on statins tended to be younger and fitter and better off than the others, Thomsen explained.

So "I believe we need to interpret these findings with great caution," he told reporters. "Therefore, randomized statin therapy trials among persons with [pneumonia](#) are badly needed to confirm or contradict the

observational findings."

Dr. Nasia Safdar of the University of Wisconsin said she saw in her research there was "lower mortality" in organ transplant patients with subsequent blood infections, and who took statins.

Two weeks after transplants, a key milestone, "when we looked at mortality, we found there was a mortality benefit to statins," she said.

"The data are intriguing. It should definitely be studied further. But at this point statins cannot be recommended as standard of carefor infection," she stressed.

Dr. Mathew Falagas, of the Alpha Institute in Athens, Greece, did a study of people with [sepsis](#), and said he believed statins showed a "beneficial effect ... for the prevention and the treatment of patients with infection."

"But some facts limit the strength of evidence including the fact that they are very heterogenic in nature and that it's not same statins or dosages and the subject varied from healthy people to chronically ill," he cautioned.

"[Statins](#) cannot and should not be recommended for the use at the present time for prevention and treatment of infections," he stressed.

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