

Statin therapy may reduce risk of osteoarthritis

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(Medical Xpress)—Regular use of cholesterol-lowering medicines called statins may reduce a person's chances of developing the degenerative joint disease osteoarthritis, UK scientists have found.

A team at the Arthritis Research UK Primary Care Centre at Keele University looked at GP data to see whether statins were associated with a reduced occurrence of [osteoarthritis](#).

They analysed records for 16,609 patients, aged 40 and over, up to the end of 2006 to see whether they developed osteoarthritis.

Analysis revealed that use of high-dose statins for at least two years was associated with a "significant reduction in clinical osteoarthritis, compared to non-statin users".

The highest statin dose - approximately 20mg per day - was associated with an estimated 60 per cent reduction in osteoarthritis risk, compared to non-statin users.

Larger increments in the dose of statins were also associated with a 40 per cent reduction in osteoarthritis risk over a four-year time period.

Writing in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, the study authors concluded: "This [longitudinal study](#) from a national clinical practice setting provides evidence that higher statin dose and larger statin dose increments were associated with a reduction in clinically defined

osteoarthritis outcome."

The reasons for the apparent link between statins and reduced osteoarthritis risk are not yet clear, but may be due to the drugs' anti-inflammatory properties.

Mohammed Rashid, from the Department of Public Health and Primary Care at Cambridge University, commented on the research in a subsequent letter to the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*.

He observed: "With a growing appreciation that osteoarthritis is at least partially driven by [inflammation](#) rather than being an exclusively [degenerative disease](#), perhaps the prevailing message from these data should be a reaffirmation of the potential use of statins in systemic [inflammatory conditions](#)."

The expert also called for clinical trials and cost-effectiveness analyses to be carried out "to conclusively decide on the feasibility of using statins as anti-inflammatory agents in osteoarthritis patients".

A spokeswoman for Arthritis Research UK said: "We welcome this study as it contributes to the idea that osteoarthritis is not simply wear and tear as we get older, and that in the future drug treatments can offer hope. Osteoarthritis is an active disease that includes inflammation and active damage to the joint.

"Arthritis Research UK is committed to finding the causes of osteoarthritis and new therapies as well as treatments, such as pain relief, that help to manage the symptoms of the condition. For example, we are funding a trial to investigate whether a drug called hydroxychloroquinone, commonly used to reduce inflammation in rheumatoid arthritis, is also effective for people living with osteoarthritis."

Provided by Keele University

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