

# Statin users eating more bad food than a decade ago, study shows

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Doctors need to re-emphasize importance of healthy diet to patients, researcher says.

(HealthDay)—Many Americans who take cholesterol-lowering statin drugs seem to believe they can eat plenty of unhealthy foods without suffering any consequences, a new study suggests.

Researchers found that people who took statins in 2009-2010 consumed more fat and calories than those who took the drugs 10 years earlier. There was no similar increase in fat and calorie intake among people who didn't take statins, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) researchers said.

Their analysis of U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey data showed that [statin](#) users in 2009-2010 consumed 9.6 percent

more calories and 14.4 percent more fat than statin users in 1999-2000.

Statin users in 1999-2000 consumed fewer calories and fat than people who didn't take the cholesterol-lowering medications, but that is no longer the case, according to the study that was published online April 24 in *JAMA Internal Medicine* and simultaneously presented at the Society of General Internal Medicine annual meeting in Denver.

"We believe that this is the first major study to show that people on statins eat more calories and fat than people on those medications did a decade earlier," study author Takehiro Sugiyama, a clinical fellow at the National Center for Global Health and Medicine in Japan, said in a UCLA news release.

"Statins are used by about one-sixth of adults. We may need to re-emphasize the importance of dietary modification for those who are taking these medications, now that obesity and diabetes are important problems in society," said Sugiyama, who led the research while a visiting scholar in the division of general [internal medicine](#) and health services research at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA.

Compared to statin users a decade ago, it appears that current users of the drugs don't feel the urgency to reduce their calorie and [fat intake](#), or to lose weight. In addition, doctors may now be more likely to prescribe statins for people who eat and weigh more, according to Sugiyama.

"Regardless of the mechanism they are problems, because eating more fat, especially saturated [fat](#), will lead to higher cholesterol levels, which will undermine the effect of statins and may lead to unnecessary cost of medications. Being overweight also increases the risk of diabetes and [\[high blood pressure\]](#), which also are risk factors for heart disease and stroke," Sugiyama said.

"We believe that, when physicians prescribe statins, the goal is to decrease patients' cardiovascular risks that cannot be achieved without medications, not to empower them to put butter on steaks," Sugiyama added.

**More information:** The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more about [statins](#).

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