

World-first trial to test whether statins prolong good health

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Monash University has launched the world's largest study to look at whether statins – used to lower cholesterol - can help people live longer, healthier lives.

The study - which aims to recruit 10,000 people over three years - will look at whether a daily dose of the drug can prolong [good health](#) and assist in maintaining independence in people aged over 70, including preventing heart attacks, dementia and disability.

It has long been known that by reducing [cholesterol](#), [statins](#) prevent heart attacks and strokes in people with a history of [cardiovascular disease](#). The drugs are already so popular that about 40 per cent of Australians aged over 65 are using them.

Lead researcher on the trial, Professor Sophia Zoungas, School of Public Health & Preventive Medicine at Monash University, said the push to get all older people to take statins could be premature.

"Overall the balance of risks and benefits remains unclear in older people. Almost all of the research into statins and health has been done in younger people. While recommendations are for people up to 75 to take statins, there is no evidence that these drugs are beneficial, or indeed harmful, in the older age group," she said.

The trial will seek to answer whether statins can prevent a first [heart attack](#) or stroke in older people, prevent dementia and whether they're useful in treating Alzheimer's disease.

It will also look at whether statins improve life expectancy and whether they impact on the day-to-day physical function of older people.

The trial, called the STAtin therapy for Reducing Events in the Elderly (STAREE) trial, will roll out over the next three months in Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia. Working through GPs and community networks the trial is targeting healthy people over 70 with no history of heart disease, kidney and liver disease, diabetes or dementia.

Participants, either taking daily statin or a placebo, will be monitored for an average of five years for heart disease, physical function, changes to cognitive function, diabetes and quality of life metrics such as ability to walk unaided and independence such as cooking for oneself. The trial is being funded by the NH&MRC.

Provided by Monash University

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