

Who really needs blood pressure, cholesterol meds?

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(HealthDay)—High blood pressure and high cholesterol are known risk

factors for heart attacks and strokes, but it's unclear who needs medication to help manage these conditions, a new report suggests.

According to a new *Consumer Reports* review, patients should consider these factors when deciding whether to take medications:

- **Weigh your risk.** Everyone aged 40 and older should be aware of their 10-year risk for [heart attack](#) or stroke. Ideally, it should be less than 7.5 percent. *Consumer Reports* recommends using a [calculator](#) developed by the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association to determine your risk.
- **Don't rush to medicate.** Some lifestyle changes may be enough to manage slightly elevated blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Exercise alone can significantly improve blood pressure, the review noted.
- **Get the right drug.** If your doctor determines that you need medication, choose the safest option available. Diuretics, or water pills, may effectively manage high [blood pressure](#). This medication may also be used along with another drug, such as an ACE inhibitor or calcium channel blocker. Low doses of statins—such as lovastatin (Mevacor), pravastatin (Pravachol) or simvastatin (Zocor)—can also help prevent first heart attacks or stroke, the review authors said.

The report was published online April 6 and in the May issue of *Consumer Reports*.

More information: SOURCE: *Consumer Reports*, news release, April 6, 2017

The American Heart Association has more about [heart medications](#).

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