

Statins tied to significantly lower death rate from ovarian cancer

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(HealthDay)—Statin drugs, used for decades to treat high cholesterol,

may also reduce deaths for women with ovarian cancer, a new study suggests.

"These drugs are appealing as they are widely used, inexpensive, and well-tolerated in most patients. The associated reduction in [ovarian cancer](#) mortality is promising," said lead researcher Dr. Kala Visvanathan, a professor of epidemiology and oncology at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore.

She pointed out that drugs to combat ovarian cancer are sorely needed, given its reputation as a "silent killer."

That's because "there are no proven screening strategies" to catch ovarian tumors early, Visvanathan said, "so the disease is typically diagnosed at an advanced stage, when surgery is often not an option."

In the new study, her team collected data on more than 10,000 [women](#) with ovarian cancer who were part of a Finnish national cancer registry. Among these women, more than 2,600 had used a statin, and 80% used so-called lipophilic statins, such as simvastatin and lovastatin—a form of the drug that dissolves within fats.

Using of any type of statin was linked with a 40% lower death rate, compared with women not using statins, Visvanathan and colleagues found. The use of lipophilic statins, specifically, were tied to a 43% risk of dying from ovarian cancer, the researchers found.

The most significant reductions in death after using statins were among women with specific subtypes of ovarian cancer—high-grade serous carcinoma (a 40% reduction) and endometrioid ovarian cancer (50% reduction).

Even women who started using lipophilic statins *after* being diagnosed

with ovarian cancer had a lower odds of dying, the researchers noted.

The results of the study were scheduled to be presented June 22 at an online meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research.

"Our results provide further evidence in support of the clinical evaluation of lipophilic statins as part of the treatment of ovarian cancer," Visvanathan said in a meeting news release. Still, the results need to be confirmed in [clinical trials](#) and other populations before becoming part of standard practice, she said.

Dr. Veena John is head of gynecologic medical oncology at Northwell Health Cancer Institute in Lake Success, N.Y. Reading over the new findings, she said it "supports many other studies that have shown statins as an active agent in treatment of ovarian cancer."

John agreed that while the results of this retrospective study are "exciting," what's really needed is a gold-standard prospective clinical trial, where patients receive either a [statin](#) or a placebo and their outcomes are then tracked over time.

"At this time there is not enough evidence to start prescribing statins to prevent or treat ovarian [cancer](#)," John said, but she is "looking forward to a randomized prospective study to confirm these findings."

Study results presented at medical meetings are typically considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: For more on ovarian cancer, see the [American Cancer Society](#).

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