

One type of non-statin cholesterol-lowering drug linked to lower liver cancer risk

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Past studies have suggested that taking cholesterol-lowering statin drugs may lower individuals' risk of developing liver cancer. In a new study of non-statin cholesterol-lowering medications, one type was linked to

lower risks of liver cancer. The findings are published by Wiley online in [Cancer](#).

Cholesterol absorption inhibitors, bile acid sequestrants, fibrates, niacin, and omega-3 fatty acids are types of non-statin cholesterol-lowering medications prescribed to manage cholesterol and lipid levels. The different classes of drugs work in different ways. A team led by Katherine A. McGlynn, Ph.D., MPH, of the National Cancer Institute, looked for associations between these five types of non-statin cholesterol-lowering medications and risk of [liver cancer](#), the sixth most commonly occurring cancer globally and the third leading cause of cancer mortality.

The investigators used information from the Clinical Practice Research Datalink (CPRD), a primary care database that covers approximately 7% of the United Kingdom population. Their analysis included 3,719 liver cancer cases and 14,876 matched controls without cancer. Additional matches were also made based on individuals' type 2 diabetes and chronic liver disease status.

Use of cholesterol absorption inhibitors was associated with 31% lower odds of liver cancer risk in the overall analysis. These medications were also linked with a lower risk of liver cancer in analyses based on diabetes and liver disease status. The study also confirmed that statins were associated with 35% lower odds of liver cancer.

No associations with liver cancer risk were observed for fibrates, omega-3 [fatty acids](#), or niacin. While bile acid sequestrant use was associated with higher odds of liver cancer risk in the overall analysis, the results of analyses based on diabetes and liver disease status were inconsistent, suggesting that replication of these observations is important.

"As few studies have examined the effects of non-statin cholesterol-

lowering drugs on liver cancer risk, the results of our study require replication in other populations. If our findings are confirmed in other studies, however, our results may inform liver cancer prevention research," said Dr. McGlynn.

More information: Use of cholesterol-lowering medications in relation to risk of primary liver cancer in the Clinical Practice Research Datalink, *Cancer* (2024). [DOI: 10.1002/cncr.35436](https://doi.org/10.1002/cncr.35436)

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