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Some Consumers Could Save \$1,300 a Year by Taking Effective, Lower-Cost Cholesterol Drug **Lovastatin and Lipitor are Chosen *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs***

(Washington D.C.) – Millions of consumers who take or need “statins” to moderately lower their cholesterol could save up to \$3.50 a day by considering the only generic version available – **lovastatin**, the *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs*TM project has found.

A Consumers Union comparison of statin drugs released today indicates that **lovastatin** – while not the most potent – is just as effective and safe for most people who need to lower their LDL (or “bad” cholesterol) by less than 40 percent.

Generic **lovastatin** costs between 92 cents and \$1.31 a day on average for daily doses of 10 mg and 20 mg, respectively. In contrast, comparable doses of other statins – such as Lipitor, Pravachol, Zocor, Crestor, and Lescol – cost between \$2.66 and \$4.86 a day on average.

However, the analysis chose **Lipitor (atorvastatin)** at a dose of 20 mg or 40 mg daily as the *Best Buy Drug* for people who need to reduce their LDL by 40 percent or more. **Lipitor** at a dose of 40 mg or 80 mg was also the *Best Buy Drug* for those who have had a heart attack and need to keep their LDL cholesterol as low as possible.

“Cholesterol-lowering drugs are among the more heavily advertised medicines today,” said Gail Shearer, director of health policy analysis for Consumers Union, publisher of *Consumer Reports*. “That can confuse consumers trying to find the most effective and affordable medicine.

“We urge people to learn their cholesterol level, and take our report to their doctors to start a discussion if they have been advised to take medication,” she added.

The report also found that most statin pills can be safely split in half for additional savings. For example, consumers who take 20 mg a day could save \$58.50 a month by splitting the 40 mg dose of Lipitor in half.

Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs is an educational and outreach initiative that will compare a variety of prescription drugs on price, effectiveness and safety to help consumers and their doctors identify the most effective and affordable medicines. Consumers can download reports from the free website, www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org, of the first three drug categories reviewed: cholesterol-lowering statins, heartburn and acid reflux treatments, and non-steroidal anti-

inflammatory drugs. Each month, *CRBestBuyDrugs.org* will feature a report on another drug category.

Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs combines evidence-based research on the comparative effectiveness and safety of prescription drugs with national-level data on drug prices. The information on drug effectiveness is derived from the Drug Effectiveness Review Project (DERP), a 12-state initiative. Price information is based on average retail prices paid in cash by consumers at the pharmacy. The CU reports are peer-reviewed by medical experts in the particular drug category.

See the tables below for more details on the statin findings.

Statin Choices for People Who Require LDL Reductions of Less Than 40%					
Generic Name with dose per day	Brand Name ¹	Average Monthly cost ²	Average Expected LDL Reduction	Proven to reduce the risk of heart attack?³	Proven mortality reduction?
Atorvastatin				Yes	Yes
Atorvastatin 10mg	Lipitor	\$81	34%-38%		
Atorvastatin 20mg	Lipitor	\$117	42%		
Lovastatin				Yes	<i>Likely</i> ⁴
✓Lovastatin 10mg	Generic	\$28	21%		
✓Lovastatin 20mg	Generic	\$40	24%		
Lovastatin 40mg	Generic	\$61	31%		
Lovastatin 10mg	Mevacor	\$48	21%		
Lovastatin 20mg	Mevacor	\$80	24%		
Lovastatin 40mg	Mevacor	\$147	31%		
Lovastatin 20mg longacting	Altprev ⁵	\$76	30%	Yes ⁶	Likely ⁶
Lovastatin 40mg longacting	Altprev	\$77	36%		
Lovastatin 60mg longacting	Altprev	\$79	40%		
Pravastatin				Yes	Yes
Pravastatin 10mg	Pravachol	\$103	18%-25%		
Pravastatin 20mg	Pravachol	\$101	23%-29%		
Pravastatin 40mg	Pravachol	\$151	26%-34%		
Simvastatin				Yes	Yes
Simvastatin 10mg	Zocor	\$85	26%-33%		
Simvastatin 20mg	Zocor	\$148	24%- 40%		

(1) "Generic" indicates drug sold by generic name, lovastatin

(2) Prices reflect nationwide retail average for September 2004, rounded to nearest dollar; data provided by NDCHealth, a healthcare information company.

(3) Combination of nonfatal heart attack plus deaths attributed to heart disease.

- (4) Lovastatin has not been proven to reduce deaths, but the evidence strongly points in that direction.
- (5) Altoprev has replaced Altocor for new prescriptions; they are the same medicine
- (6) Based on the results for shorter-acting versions of the drugs.

Statin Choices for Higher-risk People					
Generic Name With Dose per Day	Brand Name ¹	Average Monthly Cost ²	Average Expected LDL Reduction	Proven to reduce the risk of heart attack? ³	Proven mortality reduction?
✓Atorvastatin 20mg	Lipitor	\$117	42% to 46%	Yes	Yes
✓Atorvastatin 40mg	Lipitor	\$117	47% to 51%	Yes	Yes
✓Atorvastatin 80mg	Lipitor	\$117	46% to 54%	Yes	Yes
Lovastatin 80mg ⁴	Generic	\$122	39%-48%	Yes	Likely ⁵
Lovastatin 60mg longacting	Altoprev ⁶	\$79	40%	Yes ⁷	Likely ⁷
Rosuvastatin 10mg	Crestor	\$91	48%	No	No
Simvastatin 40mg	Zocor	\$148	41%	Yes	Yes

- (1) "Generic" indicates drug sold by generic name, lovastatin
- (2) Prices reflect nationwide retail average for September 2004, rounded to nearest dollar; data provided by NDCHealth, a healthcare information company
- (3) Combination of nonfatal heart attack plus deaths attributed to heart disease
- (4) Requires taking two 40 mg tablets.
- (5) Lovastatin has not been proven to reduce deaths, but the evidence strongly points in that direction
- (6) Altoprev has replaced Altocor; they are the same medicine.
- (7) Based on the results for shorter-acting versions of the drug.

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