



## Our Recommendations

**If you have high cholesterol** or are at risk of heart attack or stroke, your doctor may prescribe a “statin” – the most widely used type of cholesterol-lowering drug. There are six statins. Three are now available as less expensive generics – lovastatin, pravastatin and simvastatin.

To help you and your doctor choose a statin medicine if you need one, *Consumer Reports* has evaluated the drugs in this category based on their effectiveness, safety, and cost. This 2-page brief is a summary of an 18-page report you can access on the Internet at [www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org](http://www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org). You can also learn about other drugs we’ve analyzed on this *free* Web site. Our independent evaluations are based on scientific reviews conducted by the Oregon Health and Science University-based Drug Effectiveness Review Project. Grants from the Engelberg Foundation and National Library of Medicine help fund *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs*.

### DO YOU NEED A STATIN?

If your cholesterol is only marginally elevated and you’re not at risk for heart disease, heart attack, or stroke, diet and lifestyle changes may be enough to lower your “bad” (LDL, or Low Density Lipoprotein) cholesterol to a healthy level. So you might try that before taking a medicine. But if your LDL is above a certain level (see the table below), and/or you are already at risk for heart disease and stroke – for example, if you smoke, have diabetes, or have coronary artery disease – your doctor is likely to prescribe a statin.

### Latest advice on LDL cholesterol reduction

Risk level and criteria*	Reduce LDL to:
<b>Low</b> - No current heart disease - No or only one risk factor	- Below 160mg/dl - Below 130mg/dl is better
<b>Moderate</b> - No current heart disease - Two risk factors	- Below 130mg/dl - Below 100mg/dl is better
<b>Moderate High</b> - Two or more risk factors	- Below 130mg/dl - Below 100mg/dl is better
<b>High</b> - Known heart or blood vessel disease - Diabetes - Multiple Risk Factors	- Below 100mg/dl - Below 70mg/dl is better

\* In addition to having an elevated LDL and/or low HDL, the most important risk factors for heart disease, heart attack and stroke are cigarette smoking and having diabetes or high blood pressure. Other risk factors include being overweight, getting little or no exercise; having elevated triglycerides or C-reactive protein levels, and having a family history of heart disease.

Statins are highly effective and generally safe. They substantially lower the chances of a heart attack and death in people at risk for heart disease or who have heart disease.

The six statin medicines differ in their ability to reduce cholesterol, and there is stronger evidence for some statins when it comes to reducing your risk of heart attack or death from heart disease or stroke.

The statins also vary widely in cost – from about \$32 a month to more than \$150 a month. (See page 2). Most people who take a statin must take the medicine for years, so the cost matters.

Taking the evidence for effectiveness, safety, and cost into account, we have chosen four statins as *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs*. They are:

- *Generic lovastatin or pravastatin* – if you need to lower “bad” (LDL) cholesterol by less than 30%
- *Generic simvastatin (20mg or 40 mg)* – if you need 30% or greater LDL reduction and/or have heart disease or diabetes, or if you have had a heart attack or have acute coronary syndrome and your LDL level is not highly elevated.
- *Atorvastatin (Lipitor) (40mg or 80mg)* – if you have had a heart attack or have acute coronary syndrome and your LDL is highly elevated; use for two years and then reconfirm need or switch to generic simvastatin.

Generic pravastatin and simvastatin have only recently become available. The price of these two medicines will decline in 2007, creating a significant savings opportunity compared to brand-name statins. Talk with your doctor about these two medicines as alternatives to the more expensive brands.

Most people who need a statin should take the lowest dose that reduces their “bad” LDL cholesterol to an acceptable “target” level. High doses of statins pose greater risk – of muscle and liver problems. But some people – such as those who have had heart attacks – may need higher doses.

No matter what dose you take, if you have muscle aches and pains when taking a statin, contact your doctor immediately. Also ask your doctor about splitting your statin pills. This can save you money and is a widely accepted practice.

*This summary was last updated in February 2007.*

## Statins – Comparative Effectiveness and Cost<sup>1</sup>

	Generic Name And Dose Per Day	Brand Name <sup>2</sup>	Average Monthly Cost <sup>3</sup>	Average Expected LDL Reduction	Reduces the Risk of Heart Attack? <sup>4</sup>	Mortality Reduction?
	<b>Atorvastatin</b>				Yes	Yes
	Atorvastatin 20mg	Lipitor	\$133	42%-46%		
CR BEST BUY	Atorvastatin 40mg	Lipitor	\$133	47%-51%		
CR BEST BUY	Atorvastatin 80mg	Lipitor	\$133	46%-54%		
	<b>Ezetimibe/simvastatin</b>				Yes <sup>5</sup>	Yes <sup>5</sup>
	Ezetimibe/simvastatin 10mg/10mg	Vytorin	\$112	45%		
	Ezetimibe/simvastatin 10mg/20mg	Vytorin	\$111	52%		
	<b>Fluvastatin</b>				Likely	Likely
	Fluvastatin 20mg	Lescol	\$79	22%		
	Fluvastatin 40mg	Lescol	\$78	25%		
	<b>Lovastatin</b>				Yes	Likely <sup>6</sup>
CR BEST BUY	Lovastatin 10mg	Generic	\$32	21%		
CR BEST BUY	Lovastatin 20mg	Generic	\$37	24%-27%		
CR BEST BUY	Lovastatin 40mg	Generic	\$58	31%		
	Lovastatin 20mg long-acting	Altoprev	\$108	30%	Yes <sup>7</sup>	Likely <sup>7</sup>
	Lovastatin 40mg long-acting	Altoprev	\$116	36%		
	<b>Pravastatin</b>				Yes	Yes
	Pravastatin 10mg	Pravachol	\$120	18%-25%		
	Pravastatin 20mg	Pravachol	\$114	23%-29%		
	Pravastatin 40mg	Pravachol	\$168	26%-34%		
CR BEST BUY	Pravastatin 10mg	Generic	\$70 <sup>8</sup>	18%-25%		
CR BEST BUY	Pravastatin 20mg	Generic	\$68 <sup>8</sup>	23%-29%		
CR BEST BUY	Pravastatin 40mg	Generic	\$90 <sup>8</sup>	26%-34%		
	<b>Rosuvastatin</b>				Likely	Likely
	Rosuvastatin 10mg	Crestor	\$109	43%-50%		
	Rosuvastatin 20mg	Crestor	\$108	52%-55%		
	<b>Simvastatin</b>				Yes	Yes
	Simvastatin 10mg	Zocor	\$107	26%-33%		
	Simvastatin 20mg	Zocor	\$187	30%-40%		
	Simvastatin 40mg	Zocor	\$184	35%-45%		
CR BEST BUY	Simvastatin 10mg	Generic	\$83 <sup>8</sup>	26%-33%		
CR BEST BUY	Simvastatin 20mg	Generic	\$140 <sup>8</sup>	30%-40%		
CR BEST BUY	Simvastatin 40mg	Generic	\$136 <sup>8</sup>	35%-45%		

UNDERSTANDING GENERICS: A generic is a copy of a brand drug whose patent has expired. For example, in this table lovastatin, pravastatin, and simvastatin are generic versions of Mevacor, Pravachol and Zocor respectively. Generic drugs are less expensive. If you are prescribed a brand-name drug that is available as a generic, ask your doctor or pharmacist if switching would be appropriate.

(1) Because of space limitations this table does not contain all dosage forms. For a full list, please see the full 18-page statin report at [www.CRBESTBUYDRUGS.org](http://www.CRBESTBUYDRUGS.org).

(2) "Generic" indicates drug sold by generic name.

(3) Prices reflect nationwide retail average for December 2006, rounded to nearest dollar; information derived by *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* from data provided by Wolters Kluwer Health, Pharmaceutical Audit Suite

(4) Nonfatal and fatal heart attack plus deaths attributed to heart disease.

(5) The combination of these two drugs has not been proven but simvastatin has. The benefit is assumed for the combination.

(6) Lovastatin has not been proven to reduce deaths, but the evidence strongly points in that direction.

(7) Based on the results for shorter-acting versions of the drugs.

(8) These generic drugs were first marketed in 2006. The price of both will decline in 2007, by half if not more, due to generic competition.