



Statins Raise Risk of Cataracts by 27%

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A US study published in the journal *JAMA Ophthalmology* on 23rd Sept 2013, found statin use to be associated with an increased risk for cataract. Millions of people who take statins to fight heart disease **could be 27% more likely to develop cataracts.**

The US researchers checked the medical records of 14,000 people over more than eight years, divided equally between those who used statins for at least three months and those who had never taken the drugs.¹

The scientists found the increased risk of 27% for statin users held up even after they accounted for other factors that could explain the result, such as high blood pressure.



More than eight million Britons take statins - the most widely prescribed drug in the UK. *GPs wrote out 61 million prescriptions in England alone during 2011.* The drugs are only given to patients with at least a 20% risk of having a heart attack or stroke within ten years.

However researchers from *Oxford University* looking at 27 statin trials involving 175,000 people, some of whom were at low risk of heart problems, *found the drugs cut the risk of heart attack, stroke and operations to unblock arteries by at least one third.*

It concluded that the benefits greatly exceeded any side-effects from taking the drug.



Around one in three people over 65 develop cataracts. Over 341,000 operations were carried out last year in Britain on the NHS.

Removing cataracts is among the safest and most common medical procedures, *while uncontrolled high cholesterol can lead to life-threatening heart disease and stroke.*

"For patients themselves, my advice is to discuss what your benefit and risk ratio is for you with your doctor." Mansi told Reuters



Normal, clear lens

Lens clouded by cataract

Cataract causes opacity of the normally clear lens. It may develop as a result of aging, metabolic disorders, trauma or heredity

They said cholesterol was necessary to maintain healthy eye cells and the transparency of the lens.

Older people are more susceptible because they make up the majority of statin users and patients with cataracts, *which cloud the eye and require surgery to prevent blindness.*

Cataracts form when the tissue inside the lens of the eye breaks down, eventually becoming cloudy. Since light passes through the lens, cataracts can distort a person's vision. Causes of developing cataracts include genetic disorders, diabetes, trauma and other conditions.²

Statins such as **Zocor** (simvastatin) and **Lipitor** (atorvastatin), *taken by one-fourth of American aged 45 and older to help fight high cholesterol*, had been linked to the formation of vision-blurring cataracts.

Source: Mansi I, Panday V, Mansi EA, Frei CR, Mortensen EM, Leuschen J. **Association of Statin Use with Cataracts: A Propensity Score-Matched Analysis.** *JAMA Ophthalmology* 2013.

¹ Study led by Dr Ishak Mansi of the University of Texas South-western Medical Center and Dallas VA Medical Center

² According to Mayo Clinic