
Statins and Drug-Drug Interactions: AHA Scientific Statement



The American Heart Association (AHA) has released guidance on managing drug interactions of statins with other heart disease medications. The scientific statement identifies specific doses at which certain heart disease medications can be used safely with statins as well as the combinations of statins and certain cardiac medications that may be potentially harmful.

“Healthcare providers should be knowledgeable about the dose limits, adverse effects, and monitoring parameters associated with these drug-drug interactions to minimise toxicity”, says the statement, which is published online in *Circulation*.

In the United States, an estimated 2.8 percent of hospital admissions are due to drug interactions. However, the number could be even higher because medication-related issues may be reported as adverse drug reactions and underlying conditions such as thyroid disease or rheumatologic disease may disguise drug interactions.

The frequency of statin prescribing for patients with atherosclerosis or at high risk of developing it makes it likely that statins will be prescribed in combination with other heart disease medications. The writing committee of the new scientific statement, chaired by Barbara S. Wiggins, PharmD, examined combinations of these drugs for potential interactions, and also highlighted changes needed in the labelling of some statin drugs with respect to drug interactions since they were initially placed on the market.

Cardiovascular Medications

The types of medications included in the statement are:

- antiarrhythmic drugs
- medications used to treat congestive heart failure
- antiplatelet agents and anticoagulants
- immunosuppressive agents
- non-statin cholesterol lowering agents
- calcium channel blockers

The article includes a summary of the evidence for drug interactions with these types of medications.

The authors advise that healthcare providers and patients should identify and review all medications that statin-treated patients are taking at each visit and during transitions of care so that drug interactions can be identified early, evaluated and managed appropriately by implementing dosage adjustments, changing to a safer statin medication or discontinuing the interacting medication if needed.

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