

Statin Use May Lower Risk of Death From Breast Cancer

Benefits were particularly apparent in women whose cholesterol levels fell after starting statins.

April 17, 2024 By [Sukanya Charuchandra](#)

Cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins appear to lower mortality risk among women with [breast cancer](#), especially those who saw a reduction in their cholesterol levels, according to findings published in [JAMA Network Open](#).

While previous research has found potential links between statin use and breast cancer-related death, few studies have considered cholesterol levels. Mika Murto, MD, of the Tays Cancer Centre in Finland, and colleagues assessed the potential impact of statins on breast cancer-related mortality. The main outcome was all-cause and breast cancer-related mortality from the date of diagnosis through December 2015.

Using the Finnish Cancer Registry, the researchers identified all breast cancer cases diagnosed in Finland from January 1995 through December 2013. They included 13,378 women who were recently diagnosed, with a median age of 62 years. The median follow-up period was 4.5 years after diagnosis. During that period, 16% of participants died, including 7% who died due to breast cancer.

Participants who used statins before a breast cancer diagnosis were at higher risk for breast cancer-related mortality even after adjusting for total cholesterol levels. On the other hand, starting statins after diagnosis was linked to a 15% lower risk of breast cancer-related mortality. Reduced breast cancer mortality was also seen in the subset of women with estrogen receptor-positive tumors who started statins.

Among women whose cholesterol dropped after starting statins, breast cancer-related mortality fell by more than 50%. But the risk did not change significantly for those whose cholesterol remained stable. After adjusting for cholesterol levels, the overall risk of death due to breast cancer was 20% lower among women who used statins.

“Results of this cohort study showed that postdiagnostic use of statins was associated with reduced BC mortality compared with nonuse, and the risk was associated with subsequent change in serum cholesterol level,” wrote the researchers. “This finding suggests that cholesterol-lowering interventions with statins may be beneficial for patients with breast cancer.”

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