

Statins in pregnancy – a lipid specialist view

“As a woman taking statins, you may wonder why we are asking you about your plans to have a baby”

Why do you want to know if I want to get pregnant?

Statins are often used as a treatment to lower cholesterol. As with all medicines it is difficult to know exactly what effect statins have on an unborn baby. The only information that we have on the effects on an unborn baby are from women who have become pregnant while on statins, and have stopped taking them as soon as they know they are pregnant.

What would statins do to my unborn baby?

On many occasions, there is no apparent damage to the baby, but there have been cases where babies have been found to have some deformities when they were born. The cases varied widely in how serious the deformities are and which statin was involved.

I want to get pregnant – what do I do about taking my statins?

We would suggest to any woman who is planning a pregnancy that they let their doctor know and the statins would ideally be stopped for three months before you hope to get pregnant. This allows time for the statin to be used up by your body so that there would be no traces left in your blood by the beginning of your pregnancy. This is often known as a washout period. We would recommend that you stay off the statins while you are pregnant and also while you are breastfeeding your baby. If you choose not to breastfeed, then you can start your statins again once your baby is born.

Will it be OK for me to be off my statins for so long?

Medical professionals feel that it is safer for you to be off the statins while you plan a pregnancy rather than risking the health of your baby. You can start taking your statins again when you finish breastfeeding your baby, but if you want another baby very quickly, we would keep you off statins while you start trying for your next baby.

What if I plan a pregnancy and it doesn't happen as planned?

This is a question often asked, and unfortunately there is no easy answer. However, women of a reproductive age do, we believe, benefit from some protective effect from their oestrogen. People who are starting IVF are usually also advised to stay off statins for their period of treatment and pregnancy. If you conceive while you are taking a statin, please do not panic – contact your Lipidologist or GP – this has happened to others before you, and the majority of women have had no problems.