



The Common Drug that Destroys Your Memory

Posted By [Dr. Mercola](#) | February 12 2011 | 153,607 views

In this interview, Dr. Duane Graveline, a family doctor with 23 years experience and a former astronaut, discusses the health implications of cholesterol, statin drugs, and coenzyme Q10.

Sources:

- » [Video Transcript](#)

Dr. Mercola's Comments:

Dr. Graveline has an interesting background that makes him particularly suited to speak on the topic of statin drugs. He's a medical doctor with 23 years of experience whose health was seriously damaged by a statin drug. His personal questions brought him out of retirement to investigate statins, which he's been doing for the past 10 years.

As a former astronaut, he would get annual physicals at the Johnson Space Center in Houston. In 1999 his cholesterol hit 280 and he was given a prescription for Lipitor.

"When they suggested Lipitor (10 mg), I went along with it because I had no reason to be particularly worried about statin drugs," he says. "I had used it a year or so before my retirement, but I wasn't a big user."

However, it quickly became apparent that something was seriously wrong.

"It was six weeks later when I experienced my first episode of what was later diagnosed as transient global amnesia," Dr. Graveline says.

"This is an unusual form of amnesia wherein you immediately, without the slightest warning, are unable to formulate new memory and you can no longer communicate. Not because you cannot talk, but you can't remember the last syllable that was spoken to you. So nothing you say is relevant anymore. In addition, you have a retrograde loss of memory, sometimes decades into the past."

He "woke up" about six hours later in the office of a neurologist, who gave him the diagnosis: transient global amnesia. He quit taking the Lipitor despite the reassurances from his doctors that the drug was not of concern, and that it was just a coincidence.

He had no relapses during the remainder of the year, but his cholesterol was still around 280 at his next physical. He was again urged to take Lipitor, and he relented.

"I admit I was concerned, but I had talked to maybe 30 doctors and a few pharmacologists during the interval," Dr. Graveline says. "They all said "statins don't do that." So I allowed myself to go back on statins but this time I took just 5 mg.

...[E]ight weeks later, I had my second, and my worst episode. In this one, I was a 13-year-old high school student for 12 hours... This is what convinced me, when I finally woke up, that something was wrong with the statin drugs. And yet, the doctors were, for years after that, still saying that this was just a remarkable coincidence.

This took me out of retirement and I've been actively involved in researching statin drugs ever since."

Statin Drugs: Not Nearly as Safe as You're Told

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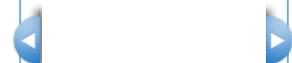


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Dr. Graveline has since published a book about his discoveries called *Lipitor: Thief of Memory*.

"In trying to reach an explanation, I called Joe Graedon and asked him if he had ever heard of any unusual reactions associated with statins," Dr. Graveline says of his initial investigations.

He was directed to the [statin effects study](#) by Beatrice Golomb in San Diego, California, and his story was also published in a syndicated newspaper column. Within weeks, the web site he had created received reports of 22 cases of transient global amnesia, along with hundreds of cases of cognitive damage. At present, over 2,000 cases of transient global amnesia associated with the use of statins have been reported to FDA's MedWatch.

But cognitive problems are not the only harmful aspect of these drugs. Other serious adverse reactions include:

- Personality changes / mood disorders
- Muscle problems, polyneuropathy (nerve damage in the hands and feet), and rhabdomyolysis (a serious degenerative muscle tissue condition)
- Sexual dysfunction
- [Immune suppression](#)
- Pancreas or liver dysfunction, including a potential increase in liver enzymes
- Cataracts

According to Dr. Graveline, a form of Lou Gehrig's disease or ALS may also be a side effect, although the US FDA is resistant to accept the link found by their Swedish counterpart, and has so far refused to issue a warning.

"The World Health Organization (WHO) reported on this in July 2007 when Ralph Edwards, who directs the Vigibase in Sweden (the equivalent of the US MedWatch), reported ALS-like conditions in statin users worldwide," Dr. Graveline says.

He has since forwarded hundreds of cases to MedWatch, but the FDA still has not been moved to act, and doctors are therefore unaware of the connection between this deadly disease and statin use.

"[W]e have anecdotal evidence that if you stop the statin drug early enough, some of these cases regress. That's why we thought it was important that FDA issue a warning, but they haven't," Dr. Graveline says.

Today, all of these adverse effects, including the cognitive problems Dr. Graveline warned about 10 years ago, are supported by published research. MedWatch has received about 80,000 reports of adverse events related to statin drugs, and remember, only an estimated one to 10 percent of side effects are ever reported, so the true scope of statins' adverse effects are still greatly underestimated.

For a more in-depth explanation of how statins damage your mitochondria and DNA, resulting in a variety of health problems, please listen to the interview in its entirety or read through the transcript as he discusses far more than I can include here.

How Statins Harm Your Brain Function

As is often the case with pharmaceutical drugs, the side effects end up teaching us new things about how the human body works. When statins first hit the market, conventional medicine was unaware of the importance of cholesterol for proper brain function. Now, researchers believe that statins' adverse effects on cognition are due to cholesterol insufficiency.

Research also began to emerge in 2001 showing the importance of cholesterol in the formation of memories.

"Then we have... dolichols," Dr. Graveline says. *"[W]hen a statin is used, it blocks the mevalonate pathway to get at cholesterol inhibition. It works very beautifully. But in so doing, it blocks CoQ10, dolichols, as well as other major biochemicals..."*

[D]olichol is one that most doctors have never even heard of before, but it just so happens that dolichols are almost as important as CoQ10 and cholesterol in cell processing."

In fact, dolichols are vital to a number of cellular processes, including:

- Glycoprotein synthesis
- Cell identification



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- Cell communication
- Immunodefense
- Neurohormone formation

Dr. Graveline goes on to explain that dolichols influence all the hormones involved with your mental condition, including your emotions and moods. And if you do not have sufficient dolichol, your entire process of neurohormone production will be altered—with potentially devastating results.

"[T]here are thousands of reports of aggressiveness and hostility, increased sensitivity, paranoia, depression and homicidal ideation," Dr. Graveline says.

There are also numerous reports of suicide.

"This whole range of what I call personality- or emotion and behavioral responses have to do with the dolichol deficiency brought on by the mevalonate blockade," Dr. Graveline explains.

"It's not just something that occurs in an occasional person... You know we're all the same and yet we're all different... You give one medicine to 10 people and if you're really lucky, in six of them it will do what it's supposed to do. That's the way it is with this. I expect there are some people that won't get any effects of dolichol suppression because they have alternative pathways. The same thing probably holds for CoQ10."

That said, it's important to realize that your brain also requires cholesterol in order for memory formation to function normally. In essence, statins suppress a number of vital elements for proper brain functioning, including cholesterol, antioxidants and co-factors like CoQ10, and dolichol.

At the same time, statins also create mitochondrial DNA and cellular damage, including in your brain.

Your brain uses glial cells as factories for producing its own cholesterol on demand. Unfortunately, glial cells are affected by statins in the same way as your liver cells, or any other cell in our body. So if you take a statin, you're also harming your glial cells and when they cease to function normally, that on-demand cholesterol capability also ceases and your brain can no longer function properly.

The Importance of CoQ10 or, if You're Over 40, Ubiquinol

It's now clear that if you take statin drugs without taking CoQ10, your health is at serious risk as statin drugs deplete your body of this essential co-enzyme. As your body gets more and more depleted of CoQ10, you may suffer from fatigue, muscle weakness and soreness, and eventually heart failure. Coenzyme Q10 is also very important in the process of neutralizing free radicals.

So when your CoQ10 is depleted, you enter a vicious cycle of increased free radicals, loss of cellular energy, and damaged mitochondrial DNA.

Unfortunately, the majority of people who take statins are unaware of their need for CoQ10, and physicians rarely advise their patients to take this supplement along with their statin—at least in the United States. It's also important to supplement right from the start. According to Dr. Graveline, once the mitochondrial damage and mutations are formed they cannot be reversed—no matter how much CoQ10 you take.

So early intervention is key. (Dr. Graveline goes into further detail of how CoQ10 offers protection against mitochondrial DNA damage in this interview, so for more information, please listen to it in its entirety.) If you decide to take a CoQ10 supplement and are over the age of 40, it's important to choose the reduced version, called ubiquinol.

Ubiquinol is a FAR more effective form—I personally take 1-3 a day as it has far-ranging health benefits. Dr. Graveline concurs with this recommendation.

As for dosage, Dr. Graveline makes the following recommendation:

- If you have symptoms of statin damage such as muscle pain, take anywhere from 200 to 500 mg
- If you just want to use it preventively, 200 mg or less should be sufficient

There's also evidence that CoQ10/ubiquinol is beneficial for Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease, and even cancer, and that large doses may be justified in those cases as well.

In addition, CoQ10 is believed to play an important role in preventing premature aging in general by preventing telomere shortening, which can slow or potentially even reverse the aging process. This is just one of the additional benefits of CoQ10, and one of the reasons why I take ubiquinol daily even though I've never been on a statin drug.

There are no reported side effects of CoQ10 supplementation, and neither I nor Dr. Graveline have ever heard of anyone overdosing on it. The only drawback is cost.

However, if you're taking ubiquinol, here's some cost-saving information for you.

Certified reduced ubiquinol is only manufactured by one company in the entire world, a Japanese company called Kaneca. They own the patent. So, as long as it's certified ubiquinol, you can buy the cheapest brand you can find, because they're all the same.

Other Valuable Antioxidants for Optimal Health—Especially if You're Taking a Statin

CoQ10, or preferably the reduced version, ubiquinol, is at the top of the list of important supplements when you're taking a statin drug. But there are also other antioxidants and nutrients that can be helpful. For example, selenium is also seriously inhibited by statin drugs, and selenium, along with magnesium, are commonly involved as co-factors in a variety of biological functions.

Other important nutrients include:

- Vitamin C
- Vitamin D
- Vitamin E—An emerging form of vitamin E called tocotrienol is 50 times more powerful than tocopherol, which has been used for the past 60 years. It also helps produce cholesterol and has other biochemical advantages
- Alpha-lipoic acid
- L-carnitine—which helps metabolize fats properly. Since about 70 percent of your muscles' energy comes from fats, it's important to have the ability to metabolize them. INSERT LINE BREAK According to Dr. Graveline: "If you take L-carnitine and find that you suddenly feel much better, then you've just proven you need it for the rest of your life because you're one of those people who have a dysfunction in this capability; you don't have the means to properly burn fats at our muscle level... naturally you would then get weak when exercising. So it's useful for making a diagnosis. If nothing happens after three months of a good dose, then I would say you can forget about L-carnitine."

The Sad Truth: Even Your Doctor has Been Mislead About Cholesterol

That said, aside from taking CoQ10 if you're on a statin, your diet really should be your primary source of nutrients. (For vitamin D, you'd ideally get it from sun exposure.) Supplements are just that; *supplemental* to an otherwise healthy diet.

"I think that when you have a statin associated muscle or nerve or even brain dysfunction, this is where you've got to go because that's where the trouble is," Dr. Graveline agrees.

"[I]f it's cholesterol inhibition, you just eat more eggs... I can't believe I went 17 years and never ate an egg. I can't believe how gullible I was. I was this young medical doctor; I marched to that band of the cholesterol-causation people... I did everything I was supposed to do, and it was all wrong. I can't believe that I was led astray, maybe for 25 years of my practice! It's so bad to have to look back and realize you've been treating cardiovascular disease erroneously because you were doing what you were asked to do. The sad truth is that cholesterol, our supposed enemy for 35 years, has nothing to do with cardiovascular disease. it is the most important biochemical in your body.

... We all listened to what amounts to brainwashing. The brainwashing that we got from 1955 on, to just recently... They have liberalized the diet stuff recently though, so people are back to eating eggs and drinking whole milk and eating butter. I went around recommending margarine for so long, and margarine is what's causing disease—butter is what's helping to cure it. It's incredible!"

This is true for the majority of our conventional medical professionals. They simply do not know better... which is all the more reason to arm yourself with the information you need to take control of your own health. Shunning statin drugs and addressing your lifestyle is the way to go if you have high cholesterol. For more information, please see [my statin index page](#) which includes a plethora of free guidance and clear advice.

More Information

Dr. Graveline covers a lot of information in this interview, so I highly recommend you listen to the entire interview, or read through the transcript. You can also find more information on his web site: www.SpaceDoc.net.

Dr. Graveline's site serves both as a tool for reporting statin complications, and a database of adverse effects, which are then forwarded to the appropriate agencies.

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