Dear Patient,

You have had your cholesterol levels checked on a recent blood test and have been identified as potentially benefiting from cholesterol lowering medication, known as statins. This leaflet is to help you decide if you wish to try this or not.

How do we assess risk?

Cholesterol is only one risk factor for cardiovascular disease or CVD (which includes heart disease and strokes). We can use a tool called QRISK to calculate the likelihood of you having a stroke or a heart attack in the next 10 years. The higher the score, the greater the risk. The more risk factors you have, the greater your risk. You have received this leaflet because you are in a moderate or high-risk group of developing CVD. The good news is however, that there are lots of things which you can do to lower your risk.

What are the other risk factors in addition to cholesterol?

Some risk factors you can control with lifestyle. Other risk factors (e.g. your age), you cannot control.

Risk factors for CVD are:

• Age, sex (more common in males) and ethnicity

• Medical conditions – high blood pressure, diabetes, chronic kidney disease

• Strong family history of heart disease (in relatives under 60 years old)

• Poor diet and excessive alcohol

• Smoking

• Being overweight and lack of exercise

What does risk mean?

Risk is the chance of something happening. Your risk of developing CVD is never zero and increases as you get older. Your QRISK score will tell you whether you are at low, moderate or high risk of developing CVD in the next 10 years.

• Low risk = QRISK2 score of less than 10% - this means you have less than a one in ten chance of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 10 years

• Moderate risk = QRISK2 score of 10-20% - this means you have between a one to two in ten chance of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 10 years

• High risk = QRISK2 score of more than 20% - this means you have at least a two in ten chance of having a stroke or heart attack in the next 10 years

What can you do to help yourself?

Things you can do:

• Stop smoking if you smoke.

• Eat a healthy diet – low in fat, sugar and salt and processed foods

• Lose weight if overweight. A healthy BMI is between 20-25.

•Take regular physical activity (aim for 150 minutes per week of moderate to intense activity e.g. 30 minutes 5 days per week of running, cycling or brisk walking).

• Drink alcohol within recommended limits (14 units per week in total).

• Take your medication to reduce blood pressure if needed.

Current NICE guidance suggests that patients with risk scores of 10% or greater should be offered the option of starting medication to lower cholesterol in addition to lifestyle changes. These medications are called statins.

What are statins?

They are a group of drugs that help to lower cholesterol. In doing this they help reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Statins need to be taken long-term to be effective. It is one tablet a day which is taken at bedtime. Statins are usually safe, and many patients take them without any problems. However as with any medication, unwanted side effects can occur. The most common side effects that can occur are gastrointestinal issues, such as constipation/ diarrhoea and muscle pains. If you commence a statin, you will need a blood test 2-3 months after starting it to check your liver function, and then once yearly after this.

What to do next?

If you would like to trial a statin, please complete the box below and return to the surgery. We will then issue the medication for you to start.

If you do not wish to trial a statin as this time then we would suggest considering lifestyle modifications and arranging a further blood test for cholesterol in 6months time.

If you would rather discuss this further then please make a telephone consultation with a GP or practice pharmacist.

Useful information

British Heart Foundation [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)

NICE decision aid for taking a statin: Cardiovascular disease: risk assessment and reduction, including lipid modification (nice.org.uk)

Has useful information and booklets. For example understanding cholesterol: [www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/publications/heart-conditions/understandingcholesterol](http://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/publications/heart-conditions/understandingcholesterol)

There are also leaflets on topics such as blood pressure and eating better.

Name –

Date of Birth –

Address –

I confirm that I wish to trial statin medication.

Signature -