Menopause and cholesterol

High serum levels of cholesterol and other abnormalities of blood fats (dyslipidemias) are associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease and stroke.

Dyslipidemias in women
- Dyslipidemias affect one in three women.
- The change in lipids at the menopause increases the risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Screening programs vary worldwide according to local guidelines and resources.
- Screening should be considered for women with premature ovarian insufficiency, early menopause, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, chronic kidney disease and familial hypercholesterolemia.
- A healthy diet, regular physical activity, maintaining a normal body weight and stopping smoking are recommended first-line interventions for dyslipidemia.
- Treatments include statins and fibrates.
- Menopausal hormone therapy is not recommended for the sole purpose of improving the lipid profile or reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Menopausal hormone therapy
- Neither systemic nor topical vaginal menopausal therapy is contraindicated in women who have dyslipidemias.
- The prescription should be personalized, taking into account age, metabolic, cardiovascular risk factors and lifestyle interventions such as weight loss.
- Oral and transdermal systemic menopausal hormone therapies have different effects on lipids.
- Low-dose vaginal estrogens have a favorable effect on lipids.
- The effect of progestogens varies according to the type of progestogen and the route of administration.
- Micronized progesterone or oral dydrogesterone may be preferred.
- Non-oral testosterone has little or no effect on lipid profiles.

Non-hormonal therapies (for menopausal hot flushes)
- Non-hormonal therapies may affect lipids.
- Sertraline and paroxetine have an unfavorable effect and increase triglyceride levels.
- Venlafaxine may increase lipid levels.
- Fluoxetine and citalopram exert a more favorable effect on the lipid profile than sertraline, paroxetine and venlafaxine.

Further information
- Mean total cholesterol. World Health Organization https://www.who.int/data/gho/indicator-metadata-registry/imr-details/2384
- EMAS CareOnline 2020 https://emas-online.org/emas-careonline
- Menopause symptom management in women with dyslipidemias: An EMAS clinical guide 2020 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.maturitas.2020.03.007