

Menopausal health:

Cholesterol and lipid disorders

Dyslipidemia refers to a constellation of lipid disorders that includes high concentrations of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) and/or triglycerides and/or low concentrations of high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-C).

Dyslipidemias are one of the leading causes of cardiovascular disease.

Cholesterol levels are increased in 37% of women aged 33–44, 59% of women aged 45–55 and 66% of women aged 55–64.

Screening for dyslipidemias

Screening should be considered for:

- Postmenopausal women
- Those aged ≥ 50 years
- Those with heart disease, stroke, diabetes, chronic kidney disease or familial hypercholesterolemia
- Those with sex-specific risk factors, including premature ovarian insufficiency, early menopause and a history of pregnancy-related complications (hypertension and preeclampsia)

Menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) is not recommended for the sole purpose of improving the lipid profile or reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease

Interventions

Recommended first-line interventions for dyslipidemia are:

- **Healthy diet** (which may include 2 g/day of plant stanols or sterols to lower cholesterol levels though long-term evidence is insufficient to demonstrate a reduction in heart attack or stroke)
- Regular **physical activity** (at least 30 minutes of brisk exercise daily)
- **Weight** maintenance
- Smoking cessation

Drug treatments

These include:

- **Statins** as first-line therapy
- **Fibrates**, reserved for patients with hypertriglyceridemia

Further information

EMAS (2025). CareOnline. Health at menopause and beyond <https://emas-online.org/guidelines-and-education/#emas-care-online>

British Menopause Society (2025). WHC fact sheet. Heart health and cholesterol in menopause <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/35-NEW-WHC-FACTSHEET-Heart-Health-and-Cholesterol-in-Menopause-JULY2025-A.pdf>

European Society of Cardiology/European Atherosclerosis Society (2011). Guidelines for the management of dyslipidaemias <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurheartj/ehr158>