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Information for Patients on:

CHOLESTEROL MEDICATIONS FOR ALOPECIA AREATA

Alopecia areata is an autoimmune condition. Medications that reduce or modify the effects of the immune system are traditionally used as treatment. You may be familiar with treatments such as steroid injections, topical steroids, diphencyprone (DPCP), anthralin, or immunosuppressive pills such as methotrexate, sulfasalazine and prednisone. New research now suggests that cholesterol medications may also be helpful. The 'statins' are a group of medications used to treat high cholesterol. Ezetimibe is a newer type of medication used in treating high cholesterol and works by blocking the absorption of cholesterol. In addition to the ability of these medications to lower cholesterol levels, these drugs also reduce inflammation.

Simvastatin works by inhibiting an enzyme that is responsible for helping the liver to produce cholesterol. Ezetimibe is a newer type of medication used in treating high cholesterol and works by blocking the absorption of cholesterol

How is the drug used in alopecia areata

1. Simvastatin 40 mg daily for 4 weeks followed by addition of Ezetimibe daily 10 mg daily after. Therefore, starting the 4th week, patients will be on two medications.
2. Grapefruit juice should not be used while taking statins
3. Blood work must be done according to schedule described below
4. Advise Dr. Donovan of any side effects.

Baseline tests before starting Alopecia Areata Protocol

1. Baseline fasting CBC, TSH, Ferritin, ESR, cholesterol, AST, ALT, bilirubin, urinalysis. CPK, LDH, glucose, HGA1c, creatinine– before starting
2. Blood tests (fasting) must be repeated at month 1 and month 2

SIDE EFFECTS OF EZETIMIBE

Common side effects (more than 1 %)

1. headache
2. diarrhea (steathorrea).

Infrequent adverse effects (less than 1 %)

1. muscle pains
2. Irritation of the liver (raised liver function tests)
3. Rash

The drugs must not be used with drugs such as cyclosporine or fenofibrates.

SIDE EFFECTS OF SIMVASTATIN

1. muscle pains in 10 %
2. Irritation of muscles measurable in the blood work (serious irritation of muscles occurs in 1 person out of every 10,000 people each year)
3. diabetes mellitus (approximately 2 % -5 % of users)
4. irritation of the liver
5. irritation of pancreas
6. neuropathy
7. sexual dysfunction

Rare but still debated side effects of statins

1. memory problems and other cognitive problems. The effects are described as rare, non-serious, and reversible upon cessation of treatment