Statins and Weight Gain

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There remains much controversy over the risks and benefits of statins for primary prevention. Besides the risks of muscle aches, diabetes, and cognitive dysfunction, I have observed over the years that for many patients, statins provide a false reassurance, as people seem to believe that statins can compensate for poor dietary choices and a sedentary life. In an elegantly performed analysis of NHANES data from 1999 to 2010, Sugiyama and colleagues have documented exactly such behavior. They found that compared with statin nonusers, statin users significantly increased their fat intake and calorie consumption, along with their BMI, in the last decade. This article raises concerns of a potential moral hazard of statin use, in addition to the already known adverse effects. Focusing on cholesterol levels can be distracting from the more beneficial focus on healthy lifestyle to reduce heart disease risk.