

# THE DOSE



Thames Valley  
Family Health Team

Thames Valley Family Health Team's Quarterly Drug Information Newsletter

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## Lp(a) and ApoB: how do they affect CV outcomes?



What do Lp(a) and ApoB add to primary prevention of ASCVD?

- Traditional CV risk factors are accurate in predicting ASCVD risk, particularly when a [validated risk calculator](#) is used.
- Adding either Lp(a) or ApoB to usual risk factor screening **does not** significantly improve accuracy to predict CV risk.<sup>1</sup>

Lp(a) and ApoB: what are they, when to order? See page 6!

What do Lp(a) and ApoB add to secondary prevention of ASCVD?

- Established ASCVD = automatically high-risk; therefore, lipid panels (incl. Lp(a) or ApoB) for CV risk screening and rescreening are unnecessary.<sup>1</sup>
- ApoB is suggested as an alternative to LDL-C (see pg. 6), but there is no added benefit in monitoring either. Trials of fixed-dose, moderate-intensity statins show CV risk reduction benefits regardless of LDL-C levels achieved.<sup>1</sup>
- 2023 RCT in 4400 patients with CAD: treating to target LDL-C is noninferior to prescribing a high-intensity statin regardless of repeat LDL-C.<sup>2</sup>

Bottom line

- No evidence that treating to target Lp(a) or ApoB ↓ mortality or MACE.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Primary prevention:** Adding Lp(a) or ApoB does not improve screening accuracy beyond usual CV risk factors +/- CV risk calculator.
- Secondary prevention:** No outcomes difference between “treat to target” LDL-C or ApoB lipid levels strategy vs. fixed-dose statin approach.
- Canadian guidelines differ on whether to order Lp(a) and ApoB – [see page 6](#)

## NACI updates HPV vaccination schedules

**Unchanged:** HPV vaccination is recommended for everyone 9-26 years of age.

**New:** NACI recommendations on what constitutes a full series of HPV vaccine<sup>4</sup>

Individuals 9 to 20 years of age	→ Should receive <b>one</b> dose of HPV vaccine	Use Gardasil 9 (nonavalent 9vHPV) as it provides the most protection.
Individuals 21 to 26 years of age	→ Should receive two doses of HPV vaccine	
Individuals ≥27 years of age	→ May receive two doses of HPV vaccine	
Immunocompromised and/or living with HIV	→ Should receive three doses of HPV vaccine	

**What is the evidence?** In 9 to 20 year old females, data up to 11 years shows that one dose is highly effective for prevention of HPV infection.<sup>5</sup> WHO guidelines also recommend a 1 dose series.<sup>6</sup>

**Ontario guidelines:** Unchanged. A two-dose series continues to be funded from Grades 7 through 12. A two- to three-dose series continued to be funded for MSM ages 9-26 (high-risk population).<sup>7,8</sup>

**Bottom line:** **Single dose** of Gardasil-9 is **considered a full series** of HPV vaccinations for those aged 9-20. Ontario continues to fund a 2-dose series for school-aged individuals.

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## Metformin can be continued in stage 3 and 4 CKD (eGFR 15-45 mL/min/1.73m<sup>2</sup>)

Metformin is first-line in most adults with type 2 diabetes, including those with mild renal impairment (eGFR 45-60). Less is known about the role of metformin in moderate to severe CKD (eGFR 15-45) and clinicians may not feel as comfortable dose-adjusting or continuing it.

To date there are no blinded, placebo-controlled RCTs of metformin in advanced CKD.<sup>9</sup> Smaller trials demonstrated that **dose-reduced metformin is still safe** when CKD has progressed to stage 3 or 4.<sup>10</sup>

Lambourg et al. 2024 <sup>9</sup>	
Cohort study of Scottish adults with T2DM. Compared outcomes of patients who <b>continued vs. stopped metformin when chronic kidney disease (CKD) progressed</b> (eGFR <30 mL/min/1.73m <sup>2</sup> ).	
Outcomes	Primary outcome: All-cause mortality. Secondary: Major adverse cardiovascular events (MACE)
Patients	4278 adults. Mean age 77 (75% were 70+ years old), 14 years since diabetes diagnosis, mean eGFR 27 mL/min/1.72m <sup>2</sup> , mean A1C 7.2%. 38% had CAD, and >80% were on an ACEI/ARB and statin.
Results	<b>Stopping metformin</b> was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associated with significantly <b>increased risk of all-cause mortality</b> (HR 1.23; 95% CI 1.08-1.41).</li> <li>Not associated with increased risk of MACE.</li> <li>Associated with increased risk of mortality due to respiratory causes (secondary outcome).</li> </ul>
Bottom line	Outcomes-based evidence supports the practice of <b>continuing metformin when eGFR &lt;30</b> , which is associated with <b>lower all-cause mortality</b> compared to stopping metformin when CKD progresses to stage 3 or 4.

### Why is metformin first-line?<sup>11</sup>

- Long-term safety data
- Effective in lowering A1C
- Reduces CV and all-cause mortality
- Low risk of weight gain
- No hypoglycemia risk
- Well-tolerated (with a slow initial dose titration)

### Standard of care

To maximize CV and renal benefit of SGLT2 or GLP1-RA, ensure patients are also on:

- metformin AND
- statin AND
- ACEI or ARB

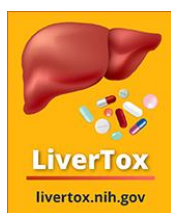


In the SGLT2 and GLP-1 CV and renal trials, most patients were on metformin, a statin, and ACEI or ARB at baseline.

### Diabetes Canada renal dosing<sup>12</sup>

Continue metformin down to eGFR 15. Renal dosing:

- eGFR 45-60: No renal dose adjustment
- eGFR 30-45: 1000 mg/day maximum dose
- eGFR 15-30: 500 mg/day maximum dose**



## Practice tool spotlight: LiverTox

Inspired by a recent case: 65M with tinea corporis who failed topical therapy. Oral treatment is needed but the patient has cirrhosis from viral hepatitis. What oral antifungal is safest?

**What is it?** LiverTox is an American resource maintained by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). It is evidence-based and regularly updated, with information on common medications and select natural health products.

**What does it provide?** The searchable drug database uses a 5-point "Likelihood score" from A (well-known cause) to E (unlikely cause) to categorize risk of hepatotoxicity. Includes guidance on potential outcomes, management, and less hepatotoxic therapeutic alternatives.

**When is it most helpful?** Assessing for medication-related causes/contributors to liver injury and comparing treatment options to determine what is safest for patients with liver dysfunction.

**Bottom line:** Like Briggs' Drugs in Pregnancy and Lactation, LiverTox uses categories (A through E) and evidence summaries to assess medications and natural health products for hepatotoxicity risk.

[Link to LiverTox - freely available online!](#)

## Rapid fire: quick updates for busy primary care providers

### Tirzepatide (Mounjaro®) prefilled pens now available

Tirzepatide (Mounjaro) is a dual glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP) and GLP-1 receptor agonist indicated for type 2 diabetes, dosed once weekly.

It was previously only available in single-dose vials and patients used syringes to extract the dose.

Prefilled pens containing four doses each are available in the following strengths: 2.5 mg, 5 mg, 7.5 mg, 10 mg, 12.5 mg, and 15 mg.

Like insulin pens, the Mounjaro Kwikpen should be **primed with each use**.<sup>13</sup>

**Cost per pen (1 month supply): \$400-800.**

Not covered by public plans. Patients can apply to the Mounjaro patient support program for some support with copay cost.

### GLP-1 RAs and risk of suicide and self-harm

Health Canada conducted a safety review of case reports of suicidal thoughts and self-harm in patients treated with glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1 RAs).

Two observational studies examined this link and no clear association could be derived due to limitations in data quality. 15 case reports were identified with and found limited evidence for a causal link.<sup>14</sup>

Key messages:<sup>15</sup>

- Current evidence does **not** support an increased risk of suicide, self-harm, or suicidal/self-harm ideation with use of GLP-1 RAs in those with type 2 diabetes.
- In patients using GLP-1 RAs for **obesity** regardless of diabetes status, results were **inconclusive** requiring further investigation.
- No updates to product monographs were made.
- Report any suspected reactions to the [Canada Vigilance Program](#)

### Provera and Depo-Provera warning: risk of meningioma

Product monograph update: warning for the risk of meningioma with long-term administration of progestins, including medroxyprogesterone acetate (MPA). Discontinue MPA if a meningioma is found. Caution is advised before use in patients with a history of meningioma.<sup>16</sup> Does not apply to IUS/IUD.

Highlights from the two case-control studies:<sup>17,18</sup>

- Associated with use of injectable MPA **beyond one year**; strong association with longer duration
- 90% of cases occurred in women  $\geq 40$  years old
- Injectable MPA was associated with 53% increased odds of cerebral meningiomas specifically, but the absolute risk remains low (0.05% in cases vs. 0.01% in controls).

## CEP academic detailing updates – New topic: ADHD in adults

**Adult ADHD:** Learn how a six-question screener can help in diagnosing ADHD, reducing the need for psychiatry referrals, wait times, and multiple visits to your office. Discuss differences in treatment options and troubleshooting adverse effects. [Link to ADHD tool](#)



**Did you know?** 75% of patients with ADHD have comorbid conditions – anxiety, depression, and insomnia are common.

Many other topics are still available!

**Pharmacotherapy for obesity:** Did you know that only four medications have an indication for weight loss in Canada? Learn about the 4M framework for assessing, initiating and managing treatment.

**Heart failure:** Not sure if it's heart failure? NT-proBNP can help rule out heart failure with a high degree of confidence. Learn about the four standard therapies for HFrEF.

Accredited detailing visits are open to physicians and nurse practitioners. Reach out to your TVFHT pharmacist or [to CEP](#) if you are not at a TVFHT site.

## Quick summaries: New products on the market

### Ixchiq (chikungunya vaccine)<sup>20</sup>

The chikungunya virus is transmitted by mosquitoes. Outbreaks have occurred in countries in Africa, Asia, and the Americas.<sup>19</sup>

**Indication:** Prevent disease caused by the chikungunya virus in adults ≥18 years old.

**Dose:** Single IM dose of a **live attenuated vaccine**.

#### Contraindications and precautions:

Contraindicated if immunocompromised or pregnant. Avoid pregnancy for one month following vaccination.

**Lactation:** Unknown if it is excreted into breast milk.

**Adverse effects:** Most common: tenderness, headache, fatigue, myalgia. Serious: reports of hospitalization post-vaccination are under investigation.<sup>21</sup>

**Efficacy:** 98.9% seroresponse rate at 28 days and 96% after 6 months in Phase III trial.

**Place in therapy:** Canadian recommendations are in development. Mosquito bite prevention is key.<sup>21</sup>

**Cost:** ~225 per dose

### Veozah® (fezolinetant, 45 mg tablets)<sup>22</sup>

First-in-class NK3 receptor antagonist that targets the hypothalamic thermoregulatory centre.

**Indication: Non-hormonal** treatment of moderate to severe menopausal vasomotor symptoms (VMS).

**Dose:** 45 mg once daily. **Monitor ALT, AST, ALP, and bilirubin** at baseline and at 1, 2, 3, 6, and 9 months after starting. No hepatic or renal dosing.

**Contraindications:** Child-Pugh Class B or C, eGFR <30, with concomitant moderate or strong CYP1A2 inhibitors, and pregnancy.

**Smoking:** ↓ fezolinetant AUC by 50% but no clinical difference and no dose adjustment.

**Adverse effects:** Headache, abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, ↑ LFTs, insomnia, and hot flashes occurred more than placebo. **FDA warning: rare but serious liver injury.**<sup>23</sup> **Endometrial cancer:** one case of this adverse effect.<sup>24</sup>

**Efficacy:** 2 fewer hot flashes per day at 4 and 12 weeks vs. placebo. Slight ↓ in severity of hot flashes but unclear if clinically significant.

**Place in therapy:** Expensive option with frequent monitoring due to risk of liver injury and no comparison to standard of care.

**Cost:** >\$200 per month

### Winlevi® (clacoterone, 1% cream)<sup>25</sup>

First-in-class androgen receptor inhibitor that decreases sebum production and inflammation.

**Indication:** Treatment of acne vulgaris in patients >12 years old.

**Dose:** A thin layer twice daily on the area prone to acne (do not spot treat). Max 1 gram per application.

#### Contraindications:

Hypersensitivity

**Special populations:** No data in pregnant or lactating people or in patients ≥65 years old.

**Adverse effects:** Most common: erythema and scaling/dryness, similar rate as vehicle-only group. Reversible hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (**HPA**) axis suppression. **Hyperkalemia** in 3.6% of patients (similar rate in vehicle-only group).

**Efficacy:** Trials included mostly **female Caucasian patients with moderate acne** (only 16% with severe acne). ↓ in acne severity scores and 4-7 fewer lesions at 12 weeks but unclear if clinically significant.<sup>26</sup> There was a trend of less benefit in racialized subgroups after stratifying by Fitzpatrick skin type, ethnicity, and race.

**Place in therapy:** Expensive option with no evidence comparing to gold standard treatment.<sup>27</sup>

**Possibly less benefits in skin of colour.**

**Cost:** \$250 per 30 gram tube

#### Reminder: Pharmacotherapy for VMS (menopausal vasomotor symptoms)<sup>28</sup>

- **First line:** Hormone therapy is the most effective option for moderate to severe VMS
- **Second line:** Non-hormonal therapy (antidepressants, gabapentinoids, clonidine, and oxybutynin) are options when hormonal therapy is contraindicated or declined.
- The SOGC has not released any statements on fezolinetant.
- [MenopauseandU.ca](https://www.menopauseandU.ca), created by the SOGC, contains many patient-focused resources

## Case: optimizing meds post NSTEMI

This bread-and-butter case shows the value of post-discharge medication reviews and collaboration between primary care and specialists.

74M recently discharged from hospital. Medication reconciliation and review were initiated by the pharmacist.

**Medical history:** NSTEMI two weeks ago with PCI x 2 to LAD and diagonal, hypertension, dyslipidemia, history of duodenal ulcer with bleed, GERD, osteoarthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, generalized anxiety disorder

**Allergies:** tetracycline – SOB, chest pain; **perindopril – angioedema**

**Social history:** ex-smoker, rare EtOH. Sees naturopath

**Relevant vitals/labs:** BP 180/71 mmHg, HR 43 bpm (in office one month before NSTEMI), eGFR 66 mL/min/1.73m<sup>2</sup>, calculated CrCL (using ideal body weight) 55 mL/min, A1C 5.9%

### Discrepancies found during med reconciliation:

1. Ticagrelor: Patient reduced dose to 90 mg once daily due to GI upset
2. Perindopril: Stopped during ER visit one week ago due to suspected angioedema
3. Atenolol: Stopped in hospital due to bradycardia

### Medication list:

1. ASA 81 mg PO daily (NEW)
2. Ticagrelor 90 mg PO BID x one year (NEW)
3. Indapamide 1.25 mg PO daily (NEW)
4. Perindopril 8 mg PO daily (NEW, STOPPED)
5. Atenolol 50 mg PO daily (STOPPED)
6. Amlodipine/atorvastatin 10 mg/80 mg PO daily (NEW)
7. Nitroglycerin 0.4 mg SL spray PRN q5min chest pain (NEW)
8. Omeprazole 20 mg PO daily
9. Lactulose 15 mL PO daily for constipation since starting ticagrelor

### Actions taken by the care team:

- The family physician was advised of the above discrepancies and booked a follow up appointment with the patient to discuss medication adherence and side effects.
- The pharmacist sent a letter to the cardiologist to advise of meds that were stopped or changed and provided recommendations:
  - Restart ticagrelor 90 mg BID, or if not tolerated switch to clopidogrel 75 mg daily
  - Start candesartan – as per chart patient had tolerated this in past
  - Consider a low dose beta blocker (i.e. metoprolol 12.5 mg BID) with close monitoring
- The cardiologist also discussed adherence with the patient and started clopidogrel and candesartan. The patient had also stopped his statin and an alternate statin was started.

**Question:** My patient had angioedema with an ACEI, what should be prescribed instead?

**Answer:** Patients who have had ACEI angioedema can safely be prescribed ARBs as the risk of cross reactivity is low.

- Risk of angioedema with ACEi is estimated at 0.2-2.5%.<sup>29</sup> While rare, this reaction can be fatal.
- Multiple studies found that ARBs have half the risk of angioedema (0.1%) as ACEIs and the incidence of cross reactivity is <10%.<sup>29</sup>
- In adults with a history of ACEi angioedema, there is no increased risk of angioedema associated with switching to an ARB.<sup>30</sup>

**Question:** Why is it important that patients are on full dual antiplatelet therapy (DAPT) after PCI?

**Answer:** DAPT post-PCI prevents early complications, readmission and improves long-term outcomes including mortality.

- Benefit of DAPT is front-loaded: 50% of recurrent cardiovascular events happen within 90 days of the initial acute event.<sup>31</sup>
- Patients with early recurrent MI have worse prognosis: one study found 50% of these patients die within 5 years.<sup>32</sup>
- The optimal duration of DAPT is not known.<sup>33</sup> This is an individualized decision balancing risks of thrombosis vs. risks of bleeding.

PCI = percutaneous coronary intervention; ACEI = angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors; ARB = angiotensin II receptor blocker

## Lp(a) and ApoB continued: what are they and when to order?

What are Lp(a) and ApoB?

Test	Explanation <sup>3</sup>	Clinical relevance <sup>3</sup>
Lipoprotein a Lp(a)	An LDL-like particle. Up to 90% of Lp(a) concentration is influenced by genetics.	ASCVD risk increases with increasing Lp(a) levels. Statins do not decrease Lp(a).
Apoprotein B ApoB	A more accurate measure than LDL-C of the total concentration of atherogenic particles, especially when triglycerides (TG) >1.5 mmol/L.	In patients with TG >1.5 mmol/L, non-HDL-C or ApoB are alternative markers to LDL-C for predicting CV risk. In Ontario, non-HDL-C is routinely reported but ApoB is not covered.

Question: Do I HAVE to order Lp(a) and ApoB?

Answer: No. The PEER 2023 Simplified Lipid guideline recommends **against** ordering Lp(a) or ApoB.<sup>1</sup>

Two Canadian guidelines differ in approach to Lp(a) and ApoB

- PEER Simplified Lipid Guideline 2023
  - no industry conflicts of interest
  - aim to make practical recommendations for primary care based on best evidence
- Canadian Cardiovascular Society (CCS) Dyslipidemia Guideline 2021

See [The Dose Winter 2024](#) for a full lipid guideline comparison

		PEER 2023 <sup>1</sup>	CCS 2021 <sup>3</sup>
Initial screening	WHO to screen	Only patients without known ASCVD. Men ≥40 years, women ≥50 years. Can screen earlier if risk factors present.	All patients ≥40 years old AND patients of any age with ≥1 CV risk factor
	WHAT to screen	History (validated risk calculator) Non-fasting lipid profile: TC, LDL-C, HDL-C, non-HDL-C, TG	History (validated risk calculator) Lipid profile: TC, LDL-C, HDL-C, non-HDL-C, TG
	Lipoprotein A	Do not check	Check <b>once</b> , only during initial screen
	Apoprotein B	Do not check	Optional, alternative to LDL-C
Rescreening	WHO to rescreen	Low-risk patients not on statin Do not repeat any lipid testing for any patient after starting statin	Low-risk patients not on statin Primary prevention patients on statin Secondary prevention patients on statin
	WHEN to rescreen	Earliest every 5 years, preferably every 10 years. Sooner if risk factors change.	Every 5 years. Sooner if risk factors change.
	WHAT to rescreen	History (validated risk calculator) Non-fasting lipid profile as above Do not check Lp(a) or ApoB	History (validated risk calculator) Lipid profile as above Use non-HDL-C or ApoB as preferred alternatives for LDL-C to titrate statin, particularly if TG >1.5 mmol/L,

Lp(a) = lipoprotein a; ApoB = Apoprotein B; TC = total cholesterol; TG = triglycerides

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