Use a systematic approach to assess suspected statin intolerance

- Statin intolerance is rarely life-threatening and may have a lower incidence than is commonly reported.²–⁴
- Statins have been associated with a nocebo effect, whereby patients experience adverse effects based on the expectation of harm from a treatment.⁵
- For muscle-related adverse effects:
  - Incidence of statin-associated myalgia is lower in blinded RCTs (1% to 5%)⁶ compared to observational studies (7% to 29%).⁴
  - Myopathy incidence is ~ 1 in 10,000 per year.⁴
  - Rhabdomyolysis incidence is ~ 1 in 100,000 per year.⁴
- Involve patients in assessing and managing adverse effects.
- Advise patients to contact you if they experience muscle symptoms, and not to stop taking their statin.⁵

**SAMS Assessment Guide**

**SAMS LESS LIKELY**

- Unilateral
- Non-specific distribution
- Tingling, twitching, shooting pain, nocturnal cramps or joint pain
- Onset before statin initiation
- Onset > 12 weeks after statin initiation

**Other considerations**⁴,⁷

- Non-statin causes of muscle symptoms including:
  - • conditions eg, hypothyroidism, polymyalgia rheumatica
  - • vitamin D deficiency
  - • unaccustomed/heavy physical activity
  - • medicines eg, glucocorticoids, antipsychotics, immunosuppressant or antiviral agents

- Elevated (> ULN; but may also be normal)
  - Elevated CK levels decrease after statin ceased

**SAMS MORE LIKELY**

- Bilateral
- Large muscle groups (eg, thighs, buttocks, calves, shoulder girdle)
- Muscle ache, weakness, soreness, stiffness, cramping, tenderness or general fatigue
- Onset 4–6 weeks after statin initiation
- Onset after statin dosage increase

- Risk factors for SAMS including:
  - • medicine or food interactions
  - • high-dose statin therapy
  - • history of myopathy with other lipid-modifying medicines
  - • regular vigorous physical activity
  - • impaired hepatic or renal function
  - • substance abuse (eg, alcohol, opioids, cocaine)
  - • female
  - • low BMI

If SAMS is likely, proceed to the SAMS Management Algorithm (see overleaf)

References available online at: nps.org.au/statins-card-refs