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New drug approved for fighting cholesterol

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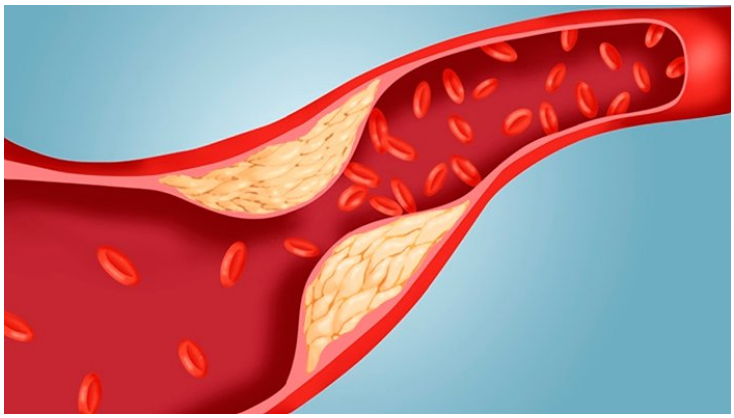
Clinical trials for the new drug found that it was effective in reducing cholesterol in people when statins alone could not do the job.



A newly-developed drug which has recently been approved for use in Singapore may aid in the fight against cholesterol.

Those with high cholesterol levels are typically prescribed drugs called statins, but not everybody responds equally well to them.

Certain people such as those who run a high risk of heart attacks or have a family history of high cholesterol may be taking statins, but still have exceptionally high cholesterol levels.

A small percentage may also not be able to take statins without developing side effects such as rashes or kidney problems.

But international clinical trials, which involved researchers from Singapore, have shown that the new drug alirocumab helps the body become more efficient at removing cholesterol from the blood by targeting a specific protein.

Previous studies have shown that this protein, called PCSK9, is associated with high cholesterol.

Clinical trials for the new drug, which involved 29,000 people from 58 countries, found that it was effective in reducing cholesterol in people when statins alone could not do the job.

Besides being prescribed as a complement to statins, alirocumab can also be given as an alternative to the cholestrol-busting drug.

The new drug was approved by the Health Sciences Authority in April, and is already available at private clinics. It is estimated to reach public hospitals within the year. A monthly dose costs around $800.