

FDA approves new, more efficient pill to lower cholesterol

Lipfendra is the first oral drug to block bad cholesterol production



By **Nicole Pilsbury** PUBLISHED: July 20, 2026 at 2:17 PM EDT

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Thursday **approved a new daily pill** that lowers levels of dangerous cholesterol. The pill is expected to boost compliance rates compared to previously used medications, according to a Thursday news release from the University of Maryland Medical System.

About a quarter of adults in the United States have high LDL cholesterol levels, putting them at higher risks of strokes and heart attacks, according to the release. Lipfendra, a product of the pharmaceutical company Merck, is the first oral drug to block bad cholesterol production — blockers were originally available only in injectable form.

“People don’t want to give themselves shots,” University of Maryland Medical System cardiologist Scott Jerome said. “When you make something easy for people, they’re going to do it.”

The injectable shot is the most efficient cholesterol therapy, outweighing all other medications. The new pill has the same efficiency in a simpler format, Jerome added.

Cholesterol is necessary to **build cells and hormones**, but an excess of LDL cholesterol can clog arteries and restrict blood flow. Diet, exercise, body weight and genetics can all be causes of high cholesterol.

Lipfendra can lower LDL cholesterol levels to around 50 or 60, a beneficial drop from the LDL level of 100 typically seen in adults not taking cholesterol drugs. Lipfendra is meant to be used in combination with diet and exercise, according to the FDA.

Statins, the common cheap drug used to control cholesterol levels for the past 40 years, have a bad stigma stemming from antimedication groups, Jerome said. Despite the lack of scientific basis, some people stop taking the medication because of the misinformation.

Statins stop the production of cholesterol, while Lipfendra blocks cholesterol from binding to receptors.

The new drug is already getting traction from consumers. Jerome's physician assistant received a message from a patient inquiring about the drug a mere day after it was approved.

He predicts it will take about three months until Lipfendra is readily available to consumers. The pill is also expected to be cheaper than the injectable version.

"Hopefully, this pill will be [available at] lower costs than the others," Jerome said. "They're easier to take, thus more compliant."

Have a news tip? Contact Nicole Pilsbury at npilsbury@baltsun.com.