



NO FLUSH NIACIN

For cholesterol control

“Statin and Niacin Treatment Reduces Risk of Heart Attack by 70%, Can Reverse Arterial Buildup.” This headline corroborates the mounting evidence that higher levels of niacin (vitamin B3) can benefit cholesterol levels and lower the risk of heart disease. The report released by the University of Washington showed that a combination of statin drugs and niacin lowers the risk of hospitalization for chest pain or heart attack by an astounding 70%. Surprisingly the combination even reversed heart disease. Cardiologist Dr. B. Greg Brown comments: “What we saw was a reversal of the disease... The patients’ arteries, on average had stopped narrowing and begun to improve” (<http://www.washington.edu/>).

While most heart patients are familiar with statin drugs, not too many are aware of the benefits of vitamin B3 or niacin for the management of cholesterol. Vitamin B3 comes in two main forms: niacin and niacinamide. Although the niacinamide form of vitamin B3 is useful for arthritis and early-onset Type I diabetes, only the niacin form is effective in reducing cholesterol.

Until recently, however, high doses of niacin were unpleasant to take, due to the uncomfortable flushing. In fact, some people could not tolerate the flushing effect that accompanied the high doses of niacin needed to manage cholesterol. Now, a No Flush Niacin product makes it much easier to benefit from this important vitamin. No Flush Niacin, also known as inositol hexaniacinate (an ester of inositol and nicotinic acid) is the ideal way to benefit from the cholesterol lowering properties of niacin. The inositol portion of the molecule is responsible for the flush-free effect.

Although doctors have known about the cholesterol-lowering properties of niacin for years, many are still reluctant to recommend niacin as a key tool in managing blood cholesterol levels. Niacin works mainly by inhibiting the liver’s production of cholesterol. Studies show that niacin not only lowers total cholesterol, but also specifically “lowers LDL cholesterol, Lp(a) lipoprotein, triglyceride and fibrinogen levels while raising HDL cholesterol levels” (Murray).

A 1994 study compared the safety and efficacy of niacin with the drug, lovastatin. In this controlled randomized open-label study, 136 patients were treated with either lovastatin (20 milligrams per day) or niacin (1.5 grams per day). At week 26 the lovastatin group showed a 32%

reduction in LDL cholesterol and the niacin group had a 23% reduction. However, the lovastatin group had only a 7% increase in HDL cholesterol, whereas the niacin group had a 33% increase. In the lovastatin group Lp(a) Lipoprotein reduction did not change, but was reduced by 35% in the niacin group. So while lovastatin had a greater impact on total cholesterol reduction, better overall results were experienced by the niacin group (Illingworth).

Dr. Murray comments: “The percentage increase in HDL cholesterol, a more significant indicator for coronary heart disease, was dramatically in favour of niacin (33% versus 7%). Equally as impressive was the percentage decrease in Lp(a) lipoprotein for niacin... Several studies indicate that an elevated plasma level of Lp(a) is an independent risk factor for coronary heart disease, particularly in those patients with elevated LDL cholesterol levels.”

More recently, a study in the *American Journal of Cardiology* touted the effectiveness of niacin for raising HDL cholesterol: “In a head-to-head comparison study, niacin 2,000 mg/day increased HDL-C more than gemfibrozil 1,200 mg/day, and decreased the total cholesterol-to-HDL-C ratio, lipoprotein (a) (Lp[a]), and fibrinogen levels significantly more” (Sprecher).

OTHER CONDITIONS THAT MAY BENEFIT FROM NIACIN

The venerable psychiatrist, Abram Hoffer, pioneered the use of niacin in the treatment of schizophrenia. He has had remarkable success with his patients using high doses of niacin (3 grams or more). Although his ground breaking work has largely been ignored by the medical community, his excellent results cannot be. Anyone suffering from this debilitating illness should contact a health care practitioner familiar with niacin therapy for more information. As this illness requires close medical supervision, self-medication is not advised. However, Dr. Hoffer recommends vitamin B3 as “a very effective nutrient in treating a large number of psychiatric and medical diseases, but its beneficial effect is enhanced when the rest of the orthomolecular program is included. The combination of vitamin B3 and the antioxidant nutrients is a great antistress program.”

Other conditions that may benefit from niacin are insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, Raynaud’s syndrome and scleroderma. Again, consult a knowledgeable health care practitioner.

SAFETY

Although niacin is very safe, liver enzymes should be monitored initially when taking the higher doses needed to lower cholesterol. However, flush-free niacin has been used in Europe for over 25 years in doses reaching 3 g per day without reports of liver damage. Persons with a history of gout, ulcers, and liver or gallbladder disease should consult their health care practitioner before taking niacin.

HOW MUCH DO I TAKE?

In a Health Wise Digest, author Zoltan Rona, M.D., recommends the inositol hexaniacinate form of niacin to lower cholesterol and avoid liver toxicity and flushing. He suggests 600 to 1,800 mg daily of inositol hexaniacinate.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

No Flush Niacin is an excellent way to lower blood fats and cholesterol. In addition to a healthy lifestyle (moderate exercise, diet and smoking cessation), there are other nutrients designed to prevent cardiovascular disease: Natural Factors Policosanol (derived from sugarcane) that may help to lower cholesterol, ClearQ (a very bioavailable combination of ClearBase vitamin E and coenzyme Q10), hawthorn phytosome, Vitamin E, OmegaFactors Wild Pacific Salmon Oil, Garlic Factors and Stress B vitamins. Your natural food store will help you find out more how these heart-healthy products can play an important role in keeping blood vessels clear and healthy.

KEY REFERENCES

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