

# The Many Benefits of Niacin

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## This B vitamin can work wonders to relieve arthritic pain and stiffness, and much more

Niacin (or nicotinic acid as it's referred to in medical circles) was the third B vitamin to be discovered (hence the name B3). It wasn't until about 1943, though, that a couple of doctors reported that niacin worked wonders in relieving the pain and stiffness associated with arthritis. Unfortunately, their research was never well publicized, since that was around the time that drug companies were promoting their own miracle "cure" for arthritis—cortisone.

Niacin has a unique characteristic. If you haven't experienced it personally, you've probably heard about the "flush" niacin can cause. As little as 50 mg of niacin can cause a flush in some people. While not dangerous, it can be uncomfortable, or even alarming, if you aren't prepared for it. (Personally, I somewhat enjoy the sensation.)

Niacin causes the blood vessels to dilate or open up near the skin, which results in a hot, tingling sensation accompanied by a red flushing of the skin. Generally, by starting with low amounts of niacin (50 to 100 mg a day) and gradually increasing the dosage, a person can quickly build up a tolerance and avoid the flush. Taking niacin immediately following a meal will also lessen the flushing sensation. (Niacinamide, the alkaline form of niacin, doesn't cause flushing and it works just as well for most things.)

Since niacin isn't something that drug companies can patent, it's of little interest to them. But whatever you do, don't overlook niacin's potential just because it's been around so long, or because it sounds like too simple of a solution.

Keep in mind that all of the B vitamins actually work in conjunction with each other—which means you can expect better results if you take niacin or niacinamide along with a good multivitamin that contains a broad balance of B vitamins.

## Arthritis

Several researchers have reported excellent results in arthritic patients using niacinamide. While niacin opens up the blood vessels near the surface and causes a flushing sensation, niacinamide only opens up the deep blood vessels like those surrounding the joints.

In cases of moderate arthritis, outstanding results have been produced by taking 1,000 to 1,500 mg a day. In more severe cases, as much as 3,000 mg to 4,000 mg have been recommended. In all instances, here and in the recommendations listed below, the dosage should be divided into five or six doses spread throughout the day rather than all at once. It should also be taken with the knowledge and supervision of your nutritionally oriented doctor.

## Cholesterol and Triglycerides

One of the most effective and least expensive ways to lower blood lipids ([cholesterol](#) and triglycerides) is to take 1,000 to 3,000 mg of niacin a day.

Patients using 1,000 mg the first day, 2,000 mg the second day, and 3,000 mg each day thereafter have seen as much as a 25 percent reduction in cholesterol levels, and a 50 percent reduction in triglycerides. (Blood lipid reduction is one case where niacinamide is not as effective as niacin.)

## Reversing Heart Disease

Heart patients on niacin treatment had less illness and lower death rates after five years when contrasted to those not using niacin. An even more astounding study revealed that niacin treatment actually reversed signs of heart disease in patients who had genetically related cholesterol problems.

Niacin lowers cholesterol and triglycerides. It reduces the blood fats called “very low density lipoproteins,” which have been linked to heart disease and cancer. It improves the blood sugar problems that can lead to damage of the arterial walls. It dilates blood vessels, which improves the circulation to areas starved of oxygen and nutrients. The list of benefits goes on and on—and if that wasn’t enough, the stuff is dirt cheap.

If you’ve got heart or circulation problems, you can save yourself a lot of money, and maybe even your life, by discussing the enormous benefits of niacin with your doctor.

## Senility and Memory Loss

Dr. Abram Hoffer, famous for his use of niacin in the treatment of schizophrenia and depression, has reported 1,000 mg of niacin taken 3 times a day can [improve memory](#), and correct some senility problems.

In one of his studies involving 10 people suffering from senility, five totally recovered, two had significant improvement, and three had no noticeable improvement.

## Insomnia

Niacinamide activates benzodiazepine receptors in the brain, which affects sleep. Dosages of 50 mg to 1,000 mg of niacinamide taken at bedtime have helped many people sleep better. (Niacin can also be used since your body can easily convert it to niacinamide.)

## Sensitivity to the Sun

Being deficient in niacin can make a person very sensitive to sunlight. Even minimal exposure can often lead to severe itching and blistering. As little as 200 mg of niacin daily can help the problem.

## Motion Sickness

I use a combination of niacin (200 to 300 mg) and papaya tablets to avoid motion sickness. Taking the niacin along with two or three papaya tablets about 15 minutes before flying in small airplanes or riding in automobiles can work wonders.

## Miscellaneous

The uses of niacin seem to go on forever. I've used it successfully in the treatment of acne. It can help reduce blood pressure; improve circulation to the legs and feet in diabetics and the elderly; and even help stimulate the production of hydrochloric acid in the stomach.

It has been especially useful for increasing the blood supply to the ear in cases of deafness, vertigo, and ringing in the ears (tinnitus). Many people can take it at the first sign of a migraine headache, and stop it cold.

It has been reported that taking niacin 15 to 20 minutes before engaging in sex had the added benefit of increasing mucus production in the vaginal area and can eliminate the need for the lubricants that can become necessary as we get older.

In each of these conditions, as little as 100 to 200 mg a day will often do the trick.

## Cautions

It's wise to keep a few points in mind when it comes to the use of straight niacin.

- Niacin may irritate the stomach lining if taken on an empty stomach, so always take it after a meal.
- If you have problems with gout, be aware that niacin competes with the excretion of uric acid. Thus, large dosages could precipitate a gout attack.
- The time-released form of niacin has been shown to be responsible for severe liver damage. In general, avoid using the time-released forms of vitamins altogether. I haven't found any that work well.

As we discover new supplements, we often fail to take full advantage of the ones that have been around a while. It continues to surprise me how little niacin is being used, especially when it comes to circulation problems and heart disease. If a prescription drug could do one tenth of what niacin does, the media would be endlessly singing its praises.