

NIACIN INSTRUCTIONS ©

1. Niacin is an excellent supportive agent. The Rx form is used to lower triglycerides, raise HDL (good cholesterol), and make your LDL (bad cholesterol) less damaging to your arteries (less atherogenic).
2. Doses vary from 1500-6000 mg daily. With the Rx form, only at upper amounts will your *levels* of LDL go down, but your LDL will become larger and less dense even at doses <2500 mg.
3. Since it so effective, it is well worth putting up with the flushing, if you are among those who will get it, for a few days.
4. Niacin may produce “flushing”, a sensation of opening of small blood vessels in the skin of the face and neck. You may see blotching, redness in the area. It usually begins within 20 min of taking the niacin, and may last 30-60 min. This may be annoying, but will not harm you in any way. Sometimes when people are sensitive, there is also tingling or itching in the same area. This is to be expected. If you develop a *rash*, not just a blotchy flushing, call us immediately.
5. The majority of people will develop tolerance to this effect if the niacin is taken regularly for 2-4 days. Sometimes it takes a day or two longer. If you stay with it, you will likely develop such tolerance, and the flushing will stop. You will notice it decreases day after day. If you stop, then start a few days later, you may not develop tolerance.
6. To prevent flushing, do not take niacin with alcohol or hot drinks. Do not take within 15 min of getting heated up, whether it is due to a hot shower, or to exercise. Becoming hot opens up the blood vessels of the skin, because the body is trying to get rid of the heat. This increases the chances of flushing, or makes it worse.
7. Take niacin with some food for the first several days. Just a snack is necessary, not an extra meal.
8. Taking a plain (non-enteric-coated, 325-milligram) uncoated aspirin or a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (e.g., ibuprofen) 30 minutes before taking niacin may help prevent flushing. A coated aspirin or Tylenol will NOT help. When the flushing stops, stop the aspirin or ibuprofen.
9. There are several kinds of supplemental OTC niacin. The “plain” is clearly the best, but is most likely to produce flushing.
10. There is a timed release form. This is “plain” too, but the flushing is less likely because it is released slowly.
11. A third type is “no flush.” This type, *inositol hexaniacinate*, is not preferred for the best effect, since all the studies were done—except for one—with the “plain” original. Either studies show no effect with this type, or more is needed. In fact, the adage is “no-flush=no benefit.” Most therapists use the “plain” version [*Prev Cardiol.* 2006;9(1):64-65]. Kaiser Permanente’s instructions for niacin use agree advise **“Use nicotinic Acid (“plain”), not niacinamide (“no flush”), as only nicotinic acid will lower your cholesterol [the most]. Also, do not use timed-release niacin.”**
12. Still, if it turns out you cannot take the plain OTC niacin, we will adjust the type, first using timed release, then “no flush.” If you take the plain for 10 days, and use aspirin or ibuprofen beforehand, and still have intolerable flushing, you will not be able to use this type of niacin, and you should call us. This occurs rarely. Just the same, we have had people with severe initial flushing, who decided to come back to niacin after several months, and developed perfect tolerance to large doses. About 10% of people cannot use the plain niacin initially. If it is attempted at another time, some of the 10% become able to tolerate it.
13. It is better to use the no flush than no niacin at all.
14. There are prescription forms of niacin as well. It is said the incidence of liver toxicity is higher with the prescription form. Some people say the incidence of flushing is less with the supplement form. The prescription form is approved by the FDA, and all forms are held to high standards. With supplements that is not the case, and you should not look for the least expensive brand—big mistake, since niacin is not expensive to begin with.
15. If you have not taken niacin before, and you do not do blood tests regularly, we will recommend doing liver function tests 1-3 months after you begin. You can do this at your PCP’s office. If not, let us know, and we will arrange it.
16. If you develop darkening of the skin anywhere, headache, dry skin, palpitation, discontinue. These are the “equivalents” of the flushing—due to the same process. There are also contraindications.