

Nicotinamide or Niacinamide

What is it?

In high-risk individuals, nicotinamide supplementation had protective effects against certain types of skin lesions and nonmelanoma skin cancers.

Nicotinamide is a water-soluble form of vitamin B3 or niacin. It is made in the body by eating niacin-rich foods such as fish, poultry, nuts, legumes, eggs, and cereal grains. Nicotinamide supplements are used to treat skin conditions and niacin deficiencies. Recent studies suggest nicotinamide may protect against some forms of skin lesions in patients with sun-damaged skin. Additional studies are needed to confirm safety and effectiveness across different types of skin cancer and in different people. In addition, the protective effects of nicotinamide against UV exposure does not mean that it protects against sunburn.

What is the benefit?

To prevent skin cancer. A large study found that taking nicotinamide can reduce the risk of getting certain types of skin cancers including basal cell and squamous cell carcinoma. A few small studies suggest it may also reduce the occurrence of rough scaly patches (actinic keratoses).

What dose should I take?

Nicotinamide or Niacinamide 500mg by mouth twice per day.

What are the side effects?

At the recommended dose, side effects are minimal and usually limited to mild nausea, vomiting and other gastrointestinal symptoms, as well as headache, fatigue and dizziness. Liver toxicity has been associated with high oral doses (more than 3 times the recommended for skin cancer prevention).

Where do I buy it?

Amazon.ca or some local drug stores and pharmacies carry it. Make sure you do not buy NIACIN as this has many more side effects.

What else do I need to know?

Do Not Take if:

You are taking anticonvulsants such as carbamazepine: Nicotinamide may increase the blood levels and risk of side effects of this drug.

You have low platelets: A meta-analysis suggests that using nicotinamide may increase the risk for low platelets, so patients should consult with their healthcare provider.

Special Point:

Although nicotinamide appears to protect against ultraviolet (UV) light exposure, it is not a substitute for sunscreen and does not protect against sunburn.

Even though niacin can become nicotinamide in the body, their effects and side effects when used as supplements are different and not interchangeable.