



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Nicotinamide

This information describes the common uses of Nicotinamide, how it works, and its possible side effects.

Tell your healthcare providers about any dietary supplements you're taking, such as herbs, vitamins, minerals, and natural or home remedies. This will help them manage your care and keep you safe.

## 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 are the potential uses and benefits?**

### **To prevent skin cancer**

A large study found that taking nicotinamide can reduce the risk of getting certain types of skin cancers. A few small studies suggest it may also reduce the occurrence of rough scaly patches. Additional long-term studies are needed.

### **To treat acne and other skin conditions**

Nicotinamide is used as a medicine for treating skin conditions such as acne and rosacea.

## **What are the side effects?**

Largely well tolerated; high oral doses may cause

- Nausea, vomiting
- Headache



- Fatigue, dizziness
- Liver toxicity
- Increased risk for low platelets

## 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.



If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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