PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Niacin

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Niacor; Niaspan [DSC]; Slo-Niacin [OTC]; True Vitamin B3 [OTC]

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to lower bad cholesterol, lower triglycerides, and raise good cholesterol (HDL).
- Some products are used to treat niacin deficiency.
- It may be given to your child for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

Niaspan:

- If your child has been given this form of this drug, talk with the doctor for information about the benefits and risks. Talk with the doctor if you have questions or concerns about giving this drug to your child.

What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child has any of these health problems: Bleeding problems, liver problems or rise in liver enzymes, or ulcer disease.

If your child is breast-feeding a baby:

- Be sure your child does not breast-feed a baby while taking this drug.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe to give this drug with all of your child's other drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug your child takes without checking with the doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- If your child has high blood sugar (diabetes), you will need to watch your child's blood sugar closely.
- Have your child's blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by the doctor.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your child's health care providers and lab workers that your child takes this drug.
- Have your child follow the diet and exercise plan your child's doctor told you about.
- Do not give colesevelam, colestipol, or cholestyramine within 4 hours before or 4 hours after this drug.
- Alcohol may interact with this drug. Be sure your child does not drink alcohol.
- Watch for gout attacks.

If your child is pregnant:

- Tell the doctor if your child is pregnant or becomes pregnant. You will need to talk about the benefits and

risks of your child using this drug while pregnant.

What are some side effects that I need to call my child's doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Signs of high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, unusual thirst or hunger, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- A heartbeat that does not feel normal.
- Dizziness or passing out.

- Shortness of breath.
- Sweating a lot.
- Black, tarry, or bloody stools.
- Rarely, a severe muscle problem (rhabdomyolysis) has happened when this drug was used along with certain drugs for high cholesterol like atorvastatin and simvastatin. This may lead to kidney problems and can be deadly. Call the doctor right away if your child has muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness (with or without fever or feeling out of sorts).

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Flushing.
- Itching.
- Diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up.
- Cough.
- Dry skin.
- Headache.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your child's doctor. Call your child's doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

All products:

- Give this drug with food.
- Avoid giving your child spicy food, hot drinks, and hot foods while your child is using this drug.
- Keep giving this drug to your child as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your child feels well.

All long-acting products:

- Have your child swallow whole. Do not let your child chew or crush.

Long-acting tablets:

- Some products may be broken in half. If you are not sure if you can break this product in half, talk with the doctor.
- Some products are to be used at bedtime. For some products it does not matter. Check with the pharmacist about how to use this drug.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- Give a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your child's next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's normal time.
- Do not give 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.
- If you stop giving your child this drug, talk with the doctor. You may need to restart your child at a lower dose and raise the dose slowly.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions

about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

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This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the

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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 to search our virtual library.

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