

# Slo-Niacin®: Lower Your Cholesterol



**L**owering your cholesterol protects you from heart attacks and stroke. Making healthy choices such as losing weight, being more physically active, and eating a heart-healthy diet will all help to lower your cholesterol. In addition, your physician may also suggest that you take *Slo-Niacin*, a B vitamin, to help lower cholesterol even more. Even though you can buy this vitamin without a doctor's prescription, you should always check with your doctor or care manager before starting it.

## How does *Slo-Niacin* work?

*Slo-Niacin* is a controlled-release form of niacin, a B vitamin that can cut down on the amount of cholesterol your liver makes. Taken in large doses, it lowers total cholesterol, LDL (bad cholesterol), and triglycerides. It also increases HDL (good cholesterol). When you take it in large

doses—1,000 to 2,000 mg a day—you should be supervised by your doctor or care manager. Do not take more than the prescribed dose of *Slo-Niacin*. If you need to take more than 2,000 mg a day of *Slo-Niacin*, your doctor may have you switch to an immediate release form of niacin to avoid liver problems.

## What side effects could I have taking *Slo-Niacin*?

Most people who take *Slo-Niacin* don't notice any side effects. However, some people do have:

- **Flushing:** You may feel warm and your skin—especially your face and neck—may get red and blotchy. This usually happens 20 minutes after taking the *Slo-Niacin* and may last for 30 to 60 minutes. Flushing can be uncomfortable, but it won't harm you. You may have less flushing if you take a half or a whole uncoated aspirin pill 30 minutes before taking the *Slo-Niacin*. (Coated "enteric" aspirin and *Tylenol* do not work.) The flushing usually stops after a few weeks, as your body gets used to the *Slo-Niacin*. It may come back if you miss a dose, take it on an empty stomach, or increase the dose too quickly.
- **Rash:** If you develop a rash that is more severe than the blotchy flushing, stop taking the *Slo-Niacin*. Call your care manager or doctor immediately.
- **Changes to skin color:** In rare cases, the skin in the armpits or groin gets dark. Tell your doctor or other health care professional if this happens to you.

- **Heart palpitations:** If you have a fast, irregular, or pounding heart beat, stop taking the *Slo-Niacin*. Call your care manager or doctor right away.
- **Nausea or diarrhea:** Call your care manager or health care professional if you have these side effects.
- **Liver inflammation:** Although it is rare, *Slo-Niacin* can irritate the liver. This will go away when you stop taking the *Slo-Niacin*. A simple blood test can check your liver.
- **Gout:** *Slo-Niacin* can increase the amount of uric acid in your blood. Tell your doctor if you or a family member has had gout.
- **High blood sugar:** *Slo-Niacin* may raise blood sugar, especially if you or other people in your family have diabetes.

Tell your care manager or health care professional if you have: diabetes, gout, peptic ulcers, liver or gallbladder disease, frequent irregular heartbeats, or if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

## Will taking *Slo-Niacin* affect my other medications?

- *Slo-Niacin* can cause muscle aches if you are also taking lovastatin (*Mevacor*), simvastatin (*Zocor*), pravastatin (*Pravachol*), atorvastatin (*Lipitor*), or gemfibrozil (*Lopid*). Let your doctor know if you are taking any of these drugs.
- If you are taking *Ticlid* or *Plavix* in addition to warfarin (*Coumadin*), ask your doctor if it is alright for you to take aspirin to prevent flushing.

## What sort of follow up will I need?

Periodic blood tests will make sure the *Slo-Niacin* is lowering your cholesterol without irritating your liver.

## How should I take *Slo-Niacin*?

We recommend that you take this vitamin in amounts that gradually increase over time. It is best to take it with meals, or with a snack if you take it at bedtime. (See the chart for examples of the best way to take *Slo-Niacin*.)

- Do not take *Slo-Niacin* on an empty stomach. If you take it at bedtime, do so with a low-fat snack. Otherwise, take it with meals.
- *Slo-Niacin* tablets may be broken on the score line, but should not be crushed or chewed; otherwise you will lose the benefits of the controlled release.
- Do not swallow *Slo-Niacin* with liquids that may bother your stomach, such as orange juice, alcohol, or hot drinks.
- 30 minutes before taking the *Slo-Niacin* dose, take a half or a whole, uncoated aspirin or NSAID pill (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory—such as *Advil*, *Motrin*, or *Aleve*). This will help with flushing and itching. Do not do this if you have problems with aspirin or NSAIDs.
- Do not skip doses. If you miss a dose or a day, flushing can come back.
- Call or e-mail your doctor or care manager if you have side effects.

## Suggested Schedule

Week	Breakfast Dose	Dinner Dose	Total Daily Dose
1 – 4		250 mg	250 mg
5 – 8	250 mg	250 mg	500 mg
9 – 13	250 mg	500 mg	750 mg
13 +	500 mg	500 mg	1000 mg

- Be sure to tell your doctor or care manager if there are reasons why you can't take any medication that's prescribed. Also, tell him/her if you are having trouble remembering to take your medication.

## How can I remember to take my medications?

We all have a hard time adjusting to new routines in our lives. These tips work for others; maybe they can help you too.

- Make a simple chart and post it in an obvious place where you will see it every day, like the bathroom mirror.
- Set your alarm clock, watch, or computer as a reminder.
- Take medications at the same time every day: before bed, at mealtime, or at the beginning of a TV show you watch every day, such as the evening news.
- Use a pillbox with seven sections, one for each day of the week.
- Record your medication on a wallet card or calendar.
- Can you think of others?

## What do I need to know about my medications?

Before you leave the clinic, take the time to ask your doctor or another member of your health care team about your medications. Ask:

- Why am I taking them?
- How often and how long should I take them?
- Are there any special instructions for taking this medication?
- Should I always take medications at mealtime?
- Are there activities that I should avoid while taking any medication?
- What kind of side effects could I have? What symptoms should I look for?
- How can I avoid side effects?

## Other resources

- Connect to our Web site at [kp.org](http://kp.org) to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and much more.
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.