NICOTINAMIDE (NIACINAMIDE) FOR NON-MELANOMA SKIN CANCER

What are the aims of this leaflet?

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about nicotinamide (also known as niacinamide). It tells you what it is, how it works, how it is used to treat skin conditions, and where you can find out more about it.

What is nicotinamide and how does it work?

Nicotinamide is a form of vitamin B3. It can be taken as tablets to prevent and treat niacin deficiency (pellagra). Nicotinamide has protective effects against skin damage caused by ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

What skin conditions are treated with nicotinamide?

There is evidence from Australia that nicotinamide may help reduce common skin cancers due to UV radiation. These include actinic keratoses, basal cell carcinomas and squamous cell carcinomas. This has not yet been confirmed in the UK. Nicotinamide is sometimes used by doctors for other skin conditions.

Will nicotinamide cure my skin condition?

Nicotinamide is not a cure for skin cancer. You must always follow sensible sun safety measures.

General Sun Safety Precautions:

- Sun protection measures include wearing a high factor sunscreen.
- When choosing a sunscreen look for a high protection SPF (SPF 30 or higher) to protect against UVB, and the UVA circle logo and/or 4 or 5 UVA stars to protect against UVA.
- Always apply plenty of sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes before going out in the sun and reapply frequently during the day and straight after swimming and towel-drying.
- Consider purchasing UV protective swim and beach wear which can particularly assist in protecting the trunk when swimming on holiday.
- Wear broad-brimmed hats, loose fitting clothing and avoiding the sun between 10 am – 3 pm.
- Remember sunscreens should not be used as an alternative to clothing and shade, rather they offer additional protection.

- No sunscreen will provide 100% protection.
- Winter sun, such as on a skiing holiday, can emit just as much of the damaging ultra-violet light as summer sun (especially at high altitudes).

What dose should I take?

A dose of 500mg twice a day was found to help prevent skin cancer in studies of patients in Australia.

How long will I need to take nicotinamide before I see an effect?

Nicotinamide may not benefit all patients. Research suggests that Nicotinamide begins to work after 12 weeks and continues to help for up to 12 months. The improvement only persists whilst taking nicotinamide.

What are the common side effects of nicotinamide?

All medicines can cause side effects and these can vary from person to person. Detailed information about side effects is found in the package insert leaflet. Please read this carefully before starting this medicine.

Nicotinamide has been reported to increase sweating, and lower blood pressure. If you feel dizzy while taking nicotinamide tablets do not drive or use tools or machines. At high doses, nicotinamide may be associated with nausea.

How will I be monitored for the side effects of nicotinamide treatment?

Nicotinamide at a dose of 500mg tablets twice daily is a safe tablet and you are not required to undergo any blood tests for monitoring.

Can I have immunisations (vaccinations) whilst on nicotinamide?

Yes. Vaccinations can be given.

Does nicotinamide affect fertility or pregnancy?

Nicotinamide is safe in pregnancy.

May I drink alcohol while taking nicotinamide?

Alcohol consumption should be limited because the risk of side effects is increased including liver inflammation and raised blood fats. If you choose to

drink alcohol you should keep within the government guidelines for alcohol consumption of not more than 14 units.

Can I take other medicines at the same time as nicotinamide?

Most medicines can be taken safely with nicotinamide, but some can interact. Always tell your doctor and pharmacist that you are taking nicotinamide before starting any new prescription or over-the-counter medication.

Drugs that may interact with nicotinamide include blood thinners such as warfarin or heparin and also any vitamins/dietary supplements that contain niacin or niacinamide.

Where can I get more information about nicotinamide?

www.dermnetnz.org/topics/nicotinamide

Please note that the British Association of Dermatologists (BAD) provides web links to additional resources to help people access a range of information about their treatment or skin condition. The views expressed in these external resources may not be shared by the BAD or its members. The BAD has no control of and does not endorse the content of external links.

This leaflet aims to provide accurate information about the subject and is a consensus of the views held by representatives of the British Association of Dermatologists: individual patient circumstances may differ, which might alter both the advice and course of therapy given to you by your doctor.

This leaflet has been assessed for readability by the British Association of Dermatologists' Patient Information Lay Review Panel

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