



DR ELSTEIN'S WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

from the world of health and nutrition

Heart Disease and Vitamin B3

The drugs called statins aren't exactly the people's favourites. They may reduce cholesterol and go some way to preventing heart disease but are not without side-effects. Vitamin B3 or niacin was one of the first remedies used to reduce cholesterol and LDL, the bad cholesterol and to increase HDL levels, which protects the heart. In addition niacin reduces triglyceride levels and lipoprotein (a), both forms of fat that are connected with heart disease.

Unfortunately the amount of niacin needed to protect the heart and achieve these effects causes uncomfortable flushing. For niacin to be effective, a dose of 2000mg has to be reached.

Now extended release niacin has been combined with laropiprant, a medication which inhibits niacin-induced flushing without affecting its therapeutic effects. Several studies have shown that combining extended release niacin with laropiprant resulted in significant reductions of LDL-C and triglycerides and a significant increase in HDL.

However, even this partnership has its problems. An analysis of several studies using this combination has revealed a mild increase in liver enzymes, raised blood glucose levels, mild increases in uric acid, lowering of blood pressure and precipitation of angina in patients on medications that dilate blood vessels.

Two trials that will be completed in 2012 are assessing the efficacy of this amalgamation in reducing heart attacks.