



Nicotinamide for prevention of BCC and SCC

Nicotinamide (vitamin B3) has been shown to have protective effects against damage caused by UV radiation and to reduce the rate of certain skin cancers.

Trials of nicotinamide in patients with previous non-melanoma skin cancers (basal cell carcinomas (BCC) and squamous cell carcinomas (SCC)) showed:

- reduction in BCC and SCC by 23%
- reduction in actinic keratoses (pre-cancers) by 15%
- reduction in skin dryness

These effects only last while people take the medication. When the nicotinamide is stopped, the benefit may be lost. It is important to take nicotinamide, and not a different form of vitamin B3 called nicotinic acid or niacin, which has unpleasant side effects like headaches, flushing and low blood pressure. These side effects do not occur with nicotinamide.

The recommended dose is 500mg twice daily. The following vitamin supplements contain this dosage:

- Nature's Own (uncoated)
- Herbs of Gold (coated)
- Blackmores Insolar (coated)

Sun protection is of course still essential for all of us, and regular skin checks are vital for people with many previous skin cancers.

References:

Chen AC et al. A Phase 3 Randomized Trial of Nicotinamide for Skin-Cancer Chemoprevention. *N Engl J Med* 2015; 373; 1618-1626

Surjana D, Halliday GM, Martin AJ, Moloney FJ, Damian DL. Oral nicotinamide reduces actinic keratoses in phase II double-blinded randomized controlled trials. *J Invest Dermatol* 2012; 132; 1497-1500