

Cholesterol Fighter in a Bottle: Niacin-bound Chromium

Anthony Cichoke, MA, DC, DACBN

Cardiovascular disease (the top killer in the United States) is frequently associated with high cholesterol. Our American diet, with fast food, toxin-loaded, refined sugar cholesterol-impregnated foods, is the frequent messenger of destruction and death.

In recent years, niacin has become widely used as a potent cholesterol fighter.¹⁻⁴ Various studies indicate doses of niacin increase beneficial high density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, lower harmful low density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, and decrease triglycerides.¹⁻⁴ However, extremely high doses of niacin are necessary (usually 500 to 4500 mg/day).⁵ The megadoses frequently cause unhappy side effects of itching, flushing skin, diarrhea, and nausea, and possibly more serious conditions such as heart arrhythmia, gout, peptic ulcers, and liver damage.⁶ In fact, the Journal of the American Medical Association reported on four cases of liver damage in individuals who had taken as little as 500 mg daily of either timed-release or sustained-release niacin for a two month period.⁵

But niacin isn't the only nutrient on the block. Evidence of the relationship between atherosclerosis and chromium-deficient diets is mounting.⁷⁻¹⁰ High cholesterol and atherosclerotic arterial plaques have been found in animals fed a chromium-deficient diet.¹¹⁻¹³ Further, even the National Research Council now states that low chromium levels are associated with cardiovascular disease.⁷

Like iron and zinc, chromium is an essential trace mineral and only small amounts are needed (50 to 200 mcg/day).⁷ Wheat germ, red meat, liver, black pepper, and brewer's yeast are rich in chromium, but only give a fraction of the RDA.¹⁴

And unfortunately red meat and liver (two of the best sources for chromium) are loaded with cholesterol.¹⁵ Almost every American is a walking chromium deficiency. In fact, USDA researchers state that 9 out of 10 American diets are deficient in chromium (i.e., furnishing less than 50 micrograms per day).¹⁶ This could be because almost 80 percent of chromium is lost when food is processed. We are loaded time bombs.

It would be great if our daily diet could furnish all our needed chromium. However, this is not possible. Pesticides, food preservatives, processing, additives, and refined sugar all leach chromium.^{15,17}

Research indicates that most people aren't getting enough chromium in their diet. At special risk are diabetics, athletes, the elderly, and pregnant women. Heart disease, hypoglycemia, maturity-onset diabetes, fatigue, blurred vision, and inhibited muscle development in athletes are known to be caused by chromium deficiency.

However all chromium is not the same. The chromium we take as supplement is not ground up chromium from our bumpers. When we take chromium, we want the most highly-bioavailable chromium possible. Recent studies indicate that niacin-bound chromium (a highly bioavailable form of chromium) can put the brakes on that roller coaster ride to high serum cholesterol. According to Professor Robert Lefavi, PhD, niacin-bound chromium can significantly increase levels of protective HDL and decrease the deadly LDL.¹⁸ Niacin-bound chromium has a synergistic effect in lowering cholesterol. In addition to this, the amount of niacin necessary to effectively lower cholesterol can be greatly reduced, thus eliminating the unpleasant and potentially serious side-effects associated with niacin at high doses. The typical daily dose of niacin (when bound to chromium) is less than two milligrams (and not the usual 500-4,500 mg). That is, in order to accomplish the same purpose, hundreds of times less niacin than the megadoses normally used to fight cholesterol are needed.

In the 1991 study conducted by scientists from Auburn University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Georgia Southern University, and the Hames Heart Institute (Claxton, Georgia), Professor Lefavi studied the serum cholesterol levels of healthy, college-age athletes and found that cholesterol could be significantly lowered an average of 14 percent, and total cholesterol/HDL ratios improved by seven percent by merely adding a 200 mcg niacin-bound chromium supplement to their daily diets.¹⁸ These findings are even more significant when we note that subjects were classified as "normal," having cholesterol levels "within normal limits."

Further, Professors M. Urberg and M. Zemel found evidence indicating a synergistic effect between chromium and niacin in the control of glucose tolerance in elderly humans.^{19,20}

Even at high doses there seems to be no evidence of side effects or toxicity from dietary trivalent chromium intake (at RDA levels).^{7,21,22}

Therefore, research indicates that hope is on the horizon for cholesterol's cascading catastrophe. Niacin-bound chromium supplementation is a viable tool in everyone's daily fight against high serum cholesterol and our country's major killer, cardiovascular disease.

Conclusion

Don't dash to your local deli or grocery store and stock up on cheesecake, doughnuts, candy, and cholesterol-laden garbage. Instead, armed with this vital information, ease on down to your local chiropractor or health food store and check out the cholesterol fighter in a bottle, niacin-bound chromium -- Just for the health of it!

*Anthony J. Cichoke, MA, DC, DACBN
Portland, Oregon*

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