Antioxidants Don't Measure Up to Zocor and Niacin for the Prevention of Coronary Heart Disease

The benefits of lowering cholesterol in patients with coronary heart disease has been well established through use of drugs commonly known as "statins". The most widely used statins in the United states include Zocor(simvastatin), Pravachol(pravastatin), and Lipitor(atorvastatin). These drugs have been shown to decrease the risk of future heart attacks, strokes, additional heart-related procedures and even reduce the risk of death.

Lowering cholesterol has measurable heart health benefits. For every 1% reduction in cholesterol there is a 1% to 1.5% reduction of heart-related events. Previous research suggests that lowering the LDL(bad) cholesterol or raising the HDL(good) cholesterol were beneficial and these benefits may be additive.

For example, a 10% reduction in LDL and a 10% rise in HDL may lead to a 20% reduction in risk. A second potentially beneficial therapy, which has not yet been fully defined in all patient groups is the role of antioxidant vitamins in the reduction of these same events particularly as they relate to combined therapy with statins. The present study was designed to look at both the role of reducing heart risk by raising HDL cholesterol and the potential benefit of antioxidant vitamins.

The study included 160 people with established coronary heart disease, low HDL cholesterol levels and normal LDL cholesterol levels. The participants received one of four different medication regimens: Zocor plus niacin, Antioxidant vitamins alone, Zocor plus niacin and antioxidant vitamins or Placebo only (sugar pills).

While Zocor plus niacin provided astounding benefit in this group of patients, the authors concluded, "the use of antioxidant vitamins in this setting must be questioned." **This study, as well as others, has been unable to provide support to the ongoing use of antioxidant vitamins for the prevention of heart disease.**

Title: Simvastatin and Niacin, Antioxidant Vitamins, or the Combination for the Prevention of Coronary Disease
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The results after three years of treatment:

	LDL(bad)	HDL(good)	Heart-related events
Zocor plus niacin	- 42%	+ 26%	3%
Antioxidant vitamins	no change	no change	21%
Zocor plus niacin and antioxidant vitamins	- 36%	+ 18	14%
Placebo only (sugar pills)	no change	no change	24%