



Red Yeast Rice A Good Alternative to Statins

Jacqueline Fields, MD and founder of Dr. Fields' Sacred Skin | August 2016

Cholesterol is a fatty substance needed by your body for many metabolic processes. It is also the precursor to all our vital hormones. So if it is too low we lose our sense of vitality and if total cholesterol drops below 140 all causes of mortality increase. In contrast if our blood cholesterol is too high then you are at an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, heart attack and stroke. Your body gets cholesterol from two sources: cholesterol containing foods in your diet and production of cholesterol in your liver. Cholesterol travels in your blood in a complex with a protein called lipoprotein. Low density lipoprotein, or LDL, is called bad cholesterol because it contributes to formation of plaque. Your liver cells use nutrients such as glucose to manufacture LDL, releasing it into your blood. One of the important enzymes that the liver uses to accomplish this is called HMG-CoA reductase. Red yeast rice has been part of Chinese medicine for thousands of years. Produced by fermenting rice with a fungus, *monascus purpureus*, it contains an active ingredient called monacolin K. This compound suppresses production of LDL by blocking the activity of HMG-CoA reductase in liver cells. Several clinical trials have found red Yeast rice is effective in reducing cholesterol in subjects with high LDL. The European Journal of Endocrinology in 2005 found that red yeast rice reduced LDL by almost 30% in subjects on the supplement for 8 weeks; those on the placebo experienced no change. Another study should a 42% reduction in LDL with red yeast rice combined with fish oil and lifestyle changes. Statin medications such as Lipitor also act on the liver to reduce activity of HMG-CoA reductase, lowering production of LDL similar to red yeast rice. The difference between the two is red yeast rice is less likely to cause significant side effects such as elevated liver enzymes and muscle pain or myalgia. In a study published in “Annals of Internal Medicine” in 2009, researchers concluded the red yeast rice is as effective as Lipitor in reducing LDL and is a good alternative for patients who are unable to take statins because of side effects. The recommended dose of red yeast rice is

1,200 to 2,400mg once or twice daily. It is important to find a reputable company for your Red yeast rice because consumerlab.com found some products contaminated with a toxin called citrinin. It is also important to remember to take an additional COQ 10 at 50-100mg dose to ensure you do not deplete your COQ10 whether you are on red yeast rice or a statin medication both can decrease your COQ10 levels. My favorite is our red rice available at the medicinal store, 900 mg per capsule. Common starting dose is 1 cap 2 times a day. Often we would like to recheck your labs at 12 weeks. Years ago there were concerns about contaminants in red rice but our physician brand of products demands quality control and is very regulated.

Article title; Red Yeast Rice A Good Alternative to Statins

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Date: August 2016

Publisher: The Healing Gardens, Fort Collins, Colorado

Pages: 1