

Niacin-ER may be overlooked cause of thrombocytopenia

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(HealthDay)—Extended-release (ER) niacin is associated with

progressive and reversible thrombocytopenia, according to a letter to the editor published online March 25 in the *American Journal of Hematology*.

Casey O' Connell, M.D., from the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, and colleagues describe four [male patients](#) (average age, 68.8 years) who were on niacin-ER for 20 months to nine years. All four patients developed progressive thrombocytopenia.

The researchers found that platelets recovered quickly after cessation of niacin-ER, with improvement noted within a month of cessation in all four patients. Based on criteria to determine the level of evidence for a causal association, three patients were found to have a "probable" association and one a "definite" association. The patients were on niacin-ER daily for 59 months, on average, at a median dose of 2,250 mg. Platelets recovered by an average of $91.5 \times 10^9/L$, with a mean time to response of 136 days. In two of the four patients who were anemic as well as thrombocytopenic, there was a marked improvement in hemoglobin upon discontinuation of niacin-ER.

"In conclusion, Niacin-ER is known to cause reversible thrombocytopenia, but this effect may be insidious and severe and can be accompanied by reversible anemia, both of which may be easily overlooked in [patients](#) with multiple medical conditions and concomitant medications," the authors write.

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