http://nccam.nih.gov/health/redyeastrice

<http://www.med.nyu.edu/content?ChunkIID=111796>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3IJDEB1EbE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoGggIDmrbk>

On any usual visit to my local Rite Aid, I tend to stray away from the Vitamins/Herbal/Nutritional Supplements aisle. I don’t take lightly on false promises and shortcuts when it comes to weight loss or aids that claim to drastically improve your life in the form of a tablet, capsule, powder, softgel or liquid. However, the supplement I chose to do this project on has a history that I find not as much interesting as I do amusing. The first written records show that people began using Red Yeast Rice as far back as 800A.D. In fact, a Chinese pharmacopeia that was written during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) details recipes for cultivation of red yeast rice and conditions that could be treated with it. As time went on, Red Yeast Rice was primarily used in China as a spice, a natural coloring agent and a taste enhancer. The western population was first introduced to Red Yeast Rice in 1884. It was noted that Red Yeast Rice had a number of beneficial effects in relation to not only the GI tract but also blood circulation and overall health of the stomach and the spleen. According to The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), this supplement is made by culturing rice with various strains of the yeast *Monascus purpureus.* Many of these Red Yeast Rice products contain substances called monacolins, which are produced by the yeast. Monacolin K is chemically identical to the active ingredient in the cholesterol-lowering drug lovastatin, which is one of the drugs in the category known as statins. These drugs lower blood cholesterol levels by reducing the production of cholesterol by the liver.

Upon learning this information, one of the first things that popped into my head was “Oh! Nice to think that an OTC supplement has the same ability to actually lower cholesterol that a prescription drug has for a fraction of the price!” Right? Wrong. This is where the FDA came in. In 1998, the FDA initiated action to ban Red Yeast Rice Supplements from the market. These supplements were eventually banned by the FDA because of lovastatin's status as a prescription-only medication. The Monacolin K found was "identical to a drug and, thus, subject to regulation as a drug." In 2003, Red Yeast Rice began reappearing on shelves by avoiding FDA restrictions and not having substantial amounts of Monacolin K.

**BRANDS:** There are over 30 companies that manufacture Red Yeast Rice. A few are Vitacost, 21st Century, Jarrow, Thorne, Nature’s Way, Nature’s Bounty, Solaray, Bluebonnet Nutrition, NuMedica Cellular Support, Traditional Supplements, Doctor’s Best and Nature’s Answers amongst many others.

**DOSAGES:** 1200 mg to 2400 mg of red yeast once or twice daily.

**INTERACTIONS:** Like with any other “statin” too much can increase your risk of serious side effects such as muscle and liver problems. Normal side effects include headache, stomach ache or bloating, gas, dizziness, heartburn, muscle aches and weakness. Acccording to Medline Plus, “Taking red yeast along with other medications that might also harm the liver might increase the risk of liver damage. Do not take red yeast if you are taking another medication that can harm the liver. Some medications that can harm the liver include acetaminophen (Tylenol and others), amiodarone (Cordarone), carbamazepine (Tegretol), isoniazid (INH), methotrexate (Rheumatrex), methyldopa (Aldomet), fluconazole (Diflucan), itraconazole (Sporanox), erythromycin (Erythrocin, Ilosone, others), phenytoin (Dilantin), lovastatin (Mevacor), pravastatin (Pravachol), simvastatin (Zocor), and many others.”