

## Treating the Common Cold: A look at Alternative Medicine and Common Cold Treatment

Scientists and researchers continue to evaluate different methods of treating the common cold. There are thousands of published studies concerning alternative medicine and common cold prevention. More studies are published almost daily. One of the obstacles that researchers face is the fact that some people can be infected with a common cold virus and never have symptoms, some recover quickly without treatment and others have symptoms for as long as two weeks. The reason or reasons for these differences among people can not be fully explained. The average person has two or more colds per year. Children, typically have more. The cold is a leading reason for school absences and doctor visits. There are no effective prescription medications for treating the common cold. Antibiotics neither prevent nor kill viral infections. Although a cold is not a serious medical condition, it can cause lost days at work and school and can lead to bacterial infections of the sinuses, throat and respiratory system, so many researchers feel that studying the effects of vitamins, alternative medicine and common cold home remedies is a worthwhile effort. Treating the common cold with zinc nasal sprays or gels has been the subject of several studies and is somewhat controversial. Some scientists and researchers believe that applying zinc directly to nasal membranes can lead to a permanent loss of the sense of smell. In fact, one group of people sued a company, because they lost their sense of smell after using a zinc nasal spray. Zinc lozenges are also available and are not believed to have the side effects associated with the nasal spray, but they are only effective in reducing the duration of cold symptoms in about 50% of the people who use them. There have been numerous studies about vitamin C as an alternative medicine and common cold remedy. Some of these studies conclude that vitamin C can reduce the duration and severity of common cold symptoms. Others show that it is an effective preventative. Still others conclude that vitamin C is not effective for treating common cold symptoms or for preventing them. One study in Helsinki, Finland reported a 28% reduction in common cold frequency with vitamin E supplementation, but a follow-up study did not support the initial results. Vitamin E seems to prevent colds in some people, but is not effective for treating the common cold. These types of studies do not take into consideration the fact that some people do not seem to catch colds as easily as others. So results are not reliable. Even acupuncture has been studied as an alternative medicine and common cold remedy. Some researchers believe that acupuncture can be a reliable fever reducer. Echinacea is often recommended by herbalists as alternative medicine and common cold treatment. However, some researchers believe that Echinacea can be toxic to the liver when used for extended periods of time and so, should not be used as a preventative.

### About the Author

Complementary and alternative medicine information about common health conditions, including natural remedies, holistic healthcare, healing.

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