Treating the Common Cold with Zinc and Vitamin C

Zinc

- Keeps the virus from replicating, which can reduce the time you suffer by approximately 50%
- Must be taken as soon as symptoms begin to appear
  - Best taken as a throat lozenge or nasal gel
    - The throat lozenge must be allowed to dissolve fully in the mouth – do not chew or swallow -- this provides direct contact with the throat to destroy the cold virus

- Shopping tips
  - Make sure supplement is made from zinc gluconate or zinc acetate
  - Avoid flavorings made from citric acid and tartaric acid (these interfere with zinc’s antiviral action)
    - Sweetening flavors (dextrose, sucrose, sorbitol, and mannitol) do not affect zinc’s action
  - Recommended daily allowance for male adults is 11 mg and female adults is 8 mg
    - Safe upper limit intake for both male and female adults is 40 mg daily
  - Research of zinc cold treatments recommend a dose of 13.3 to 23 mg of zinc, every 2 hours while symptoms persist
    - Do not take this high dosage any longer than necessary -- short term use of a high dose is considered safe
    - Only use high dose for longer than one week IF physician has recommended

- Cautions
  - High dosage of zinc can cause side effects:
    - Stomach upset
    - Unpleasant taste in mouth
    - Can interfere with copper absorption
      - The combination of excess zinc and low copper levels can actually suppress immune system, cause anemia and possible heart problems
        - Make sure you have adequate copper intake while using higher doses of zinc
      - Long-term high dosage (100 mg+ daily) may:
        - lower levels of good cholesterol “HDL”
        - suppress immune function
        - increase risk of prostate cancer
  - Zinc nasal gels may cause temporary to permanent loss of smell and pain in the nose
  - Can impair the absorption of some antibiotics

Vitamin C

- Research has found that vitamin C does little to reduce either the length or severity of colds
  - However, studies have found that it may lower the risk of catching a cold among people whose bodies are under high physical stress (i.e. marathon runners or military personnel)
Recommended daily allowance for adult males is 90 mg/daily; female adults 75 mg/daily (smokers need an additional 35 mg daily)

- Taking more than 500 mg of vitamin C at any one time is useless as the body cannot absorb
- The safe Upper Tolerable Intake Level is 2,000 mg/daily
  - At this level or above may experience severe diarrhea/gastric upset
- Research that supports the theory that vitamin C can prevent colds is based on 1,000 mg/daily

Persons with kidney disease should avoid vitamin C supplementation. Vitamin C has been linked to kidney stone formation for those with kidney stone history

One study has suggested that high amounts of vitamin C can reduce the effectiveness of statin-type cholesterol drugs

Vitamin C may also interfere with the absorption of tricyclic antidepressants and anticoagulants

Sources:

National Institute of Health, December 2008
Newsweek, November 2007
Consumerlab.com, December 2008

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