

## The Common Cold and Zinc

In addition to being a time of New Year's resolutions, this time of year is also a time for the common cold – an upper respiratory infection caused by one of hundreds of different viruses. Its symptoms include nasal discharge, sneezing, stuffiness, sore throat, fatigue, muscle aches, headache, and occasionally a low-grade fever.

Over the years various individuals have claimed to have found a cure to alleviate the symptoms of a cold, but most of these were founded on theory with no real science to support the claims.

In 1996 researchers at the Cleveland Clinic made zinc the hot cure for the common cold when they published their study findings showing that zinc lozenges when consumed consistently at the beginning stages of a cold reduced the duration of a cold by several days. Since then several more clinical trials of zinc lozenges have been conducted with the results evenly split pro and con.

Several theories have been given as to how zinc works to impede the cold process. Some studies show that zinc interferes with the formation of the outer protein coat of cold viruses, hindering viral reproduction. Other studies suggest that zinc can block the adhesion of viruses to nasal tissue. Some scientists suggest that zinc works by boosting the activity of the immune system. Others suggest that cold symptoms are an anti-inflammatory response to the cold virus and zinc works by impeding some of the physiological processes of inflammation.

Based on the review of the studies to date experts recommend that if you plan to give zinc lozenges a try, positive test results have come when:

- • People started taking the lozenges in the first 24-48 hours after symptoms appeared
- • The zinc lozenges contained at least 13 mg of zinc per lozenge
- • Subjects sucked on a lozenge every two to three hours for several days

Note: Zinc lozenge studies on children have produced negative results, even the study conducted by the same Cleveland researchers whose studies on adults were positive.

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