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## VITC, A, ZINC & ECHINACEA

### Conquering the Common Cold

Zinc, vitamin C, and beta carotene (pro-vitamin A) are a powerful team that plays a vital role in boosting your body's immune function and fighting infections. In combination with healing herbs such as Echinacea, ginger, wild cherry bark and licorice, these three essential nutrients may work even better to help you ward off sore throats and colds.

#### Zinc

The mineral zinc was recognized for its powerful healing qualities by the ancient Egyptians. In more recent times researchers have identified zinc as an activator of at least 100 important enzyme functions in the human body. It is known that zinc is essential for immune function, the ability of the body to resist and fight infections. Zinc enhances the activity of vitamin A. Both nutrients are essential for the health and integrity of the epithelial cells. These cells form the membranes that line the mouth, throat, sinuses, the stomach and bowels as well as the internal organs of the body. Since the early 1970's, zinc has been closely examined for its antiviral activity particularly with regard to the ubiquitous rhinoviruses, the nasties associated with the common cold and sore throats.

Almost twenty years ago, a three year old girl who was undergoing treatment for cancer and receiving vitamin and mineral supplements as part of her therapy came down with a sore throat and cold. It made it difficult for her to swallow the whole tablets and she was encouraged to chew them instead. Within two hours of chewing a zinc supplement, her sore throat and other cold symptoms miraculously disappeared. Her parents having observed this effect drew it to the attention of their physician. Ultimately, a clinical study was set up and conclusively established the anti-cold virus activity of zinc. It seems that when the zinc tablet is chewed, the mineral ionizes in the saliva, migrates into the tissues of the mouth and from there enters the blood stream where it then comes in contact with the cold virus, binds with its shell and neutralizes it.

It is difficult to get adequate amounts of zinc from the diet. Just to meet the so-called

recommended dietary allowances for an adult male would require consuming far more red meat than what would be healthy. The bad agriculture practices of the last fifty years or so have depleted the soils to the point that nuts, seeds and grains, normally good sources of zinc, will not necessarily supply adequate amounts of this vital mineral.

#### Vitamin C

Vitamin C has long been recognized for its antiviral and anti-toxin activity. Its ability to prevent colds reflects its antiviral effect. Vitamin C reduces the severity and duration of colds because it neutralizes the toxins produced by the cold viruses. It is these toxins that cause the symptoms of runny nose, muscle pain, headache, and inflammation. Another way vitamin C protects against colds is that it helps to protect the body from environmental pollutants that lower the body's resistance to viral infections. Unfortunately, one may not be getting enough vitamin C in the diet to benefit from its anti-toxin and antiviral qualities. The so-called recommended daily allowances of thirty to sixty milligrams for vitamin C in the diet may be enough to prevent scurvy which is the terminal stage of vitamin C deficiency. A terminal stage means one is dying from the lack of the vitamin. What then are the other stages of vitamin or mineral deficiency? A lower resistance to infection? Slow healing of wounds and infections?

#### Beta Carotene - Pro-Vitamin A

Beta carotene or vitamin A helps the body resist colds. It also helps the body resist other viral infections. Vitamin A in its role of helping to protect the adrenal glands benefits the thymus gland. The thymus, which is the master gland for immune function, shrinks when the adrenals enlarge as a result of illness or excess stress. Vitamin A helps prevent adrenal enlargement. And as noted above vitamin A plays a key role with the mineral zinc in maintaining the health and integrity of the epithelial cells. According to nutritional surveys vitamin A is another nutrient that many people do not get enough of from their diet. The excessive use of nitrate fertilizers causes the plants to absorb them into their tissues where it turns nitrates into nitrites which in turn oxidize and compromise the beta carotene reducing its bio-activity. Vitamin C is also adversely affected this way.



#### Echinacea

Echinacea is reported by R. Bauer and H. Wagner (Echinacea, Stand der Forschung, Zeitschr. f. Phytotherapie 9, 151-159, 1988) to have powerful immune stimulating and antiviral effect. Others (Orinda, et al., Arzneim Forsch 23, 1119-1120, 1970 and Wachter, et al., Planta Medica 33, 89-102, 1978) have investigated Echinacea's positive effect against colds and flu.

#### Ginger

Ginger has long been recognized by herbalists for its heating effect on the tissues which stimulates circulation of the blood and helps to promote healing. Ginger as an expectorant helps to clear the bronchial passages of mucous.

#### Wild Cherry Bark

Wild cherry bark is valued by herbalists for managing fevers and severe coughs. It is recognized for its tonic effect on the chest and lungs. Early American settlers used it in cough syrups.

#### Licorice

Licorice is a popular herbal remedy for coughs and chest colds. Its use for easing dry coughs dates back to the third century. It is noted for its soothing effect.

Thanks to modern science, a chewable supplement is now available in health food stores that combine vitamin C, beta carotene, and zinc with these healing herbs so one may enjoy the potential health benefits such a combination may offer.

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