

MEDIA RELEASE
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ZINC MAY REDUCE COLD SYMPTOMS

While the common cold is a long way from most New Zealanders' minds, winter will soon be upon us and it's time to stock up your arsenal against one of the most widespread illnesses in the world.

According to a new review published by *The Cochrane Collaboration*, zinc supplements may reduce the severity and duration of the common cold.

Zinc syrup, lozenges or tablets taken within a day of the onset of cold symptoms could reduce the severity and length of the illness.

Fifteen clinical trials found that after seven days, more patients taking zinc had cleared their symptoms compared to those taking placebo.

The authors of the review said that when supplemented for at least five months, zinc also reduces cold incidence, school absenteeism and prescription of antibiotics in children.

Professor Shaun Holt, medical advisor and researcher says that the findings are particularly important as they come from the [Cochrane Collaboration](#), who can produce very high quality research.

"Almost half of time taken off work is for the common cold and, as zinc appears to reduce the duration of symptoms by around a day, this is an important finding. The research found that you can get this benefit if you start taking the zinc soon after symptoms start. Alternatively, if you take it every day, the research found that you will suffer around 40% fewer colds.

"Zinc can be taken as a syrup, tablets or lozenges. The common cold is the most widespread illness in the world and the average New Zealand adult will have around three episodes a year, and children tend to have more. We need further information on what dose to take, and how effective it is for people with other chronic illnesses. But overall, these are very exciting results," says Prof. Holt.

Michelle Palmer, Executive Director of Natural Products New Zealand says that the economic impact of cold-related work loss exceeds US\$20billion per year.

"It is estimated that adults suffer from between two to four colds annually and children may have up to 12 colds per year. With days of work and school, this comes at a huge cost to any economy. While millions of dollars are spent on over-the-counter drugs for symptomatic relief, there is still no silver bullet for the common cold. We still need to learn more, but zinc could be worth putting in your cupboard this winter," says Mrs Palmer



Source: The Cochrane Collaboration

Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD001364.pub3. "Zinc for the common cold"

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Note: Natural Products New Zealand (NPNZ) represents over 80% of the Natural Products industry. Based on a survey of wholesale and retail sales information, export data and industry surveys, NPNZ's members make up the overwhelming majority of the natural products industry in terms of product lines, turnover, employment and exports.

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