**Citation: HemiläH, ChalkerE, Douglas B. Vitamin C forpreventing and treating thecommon cold. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2007,**

Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) for preventing and treating the common cold has been a subject of controversy for 70 years.

OBJECTIVES:

To find out whether vitamin C reduces the incidence, the duration or severity of the common cold when used either as a continuous regular supplementation every day or as a therapy at the onset of cold symptoms.

SEARCH METHODS:

We searched CENTRAL 2012, Issue 11, MEDLINE (1966 to November week 3, 2012), EMBASE (1990 to November 2012), CINAHL (January 2010 to November 2012), LILACS (January 2010 to November 2012) and Web of Science (January 2010 to November 2012).

SELECTION CRITERIA:

We excluded trials which used less than 0.2 g per day of vitamin C and trials without a placebo comparison. We restricted our review to placebo-controlled trials.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS:

Two review authors independently extracted data. We assessed 'incidence' of colds during regular supplementation as the proportion of participants experiencing one or more colds during the study period. 'Duration' was the mean AUTHORS' number of days of illness of cold episodes.

Main results

Twenty-nine trial comparisons involving 11,306 participants contributed to the meta-analysis on the risk ratio (RR) of developing a cold whilst taking prophylactic vitamin C. In the general community trials, involving 10,708 participants, the pooled RR was 0.97 (95% conﬁdence interval (CI) 0.94 to 1.00). Five trials involving a total of 598 marathon runners, skiers and soldiers on subarctic exercises yielded a pooled RR of 0.48 (95% CI 0.35 to 0.64).

Twenty-nine comparisons examined the effect of prophylactic vitamin C on common cold duration (9649 episodes). In adults the duration of colds was reduced by 8% (3% to 12%), and in children by 13% (6% to 21%). The severity of colds was signiﬁcantly reduced in the prophylaxis trials.Seven trial comparisons examined the effect of therapeutic vitamin C (3249 episodes). No consistent differences from the placebo group were seen in the duration or severity of colds.

Authors’ conclusions

The failure of vitamin C supplementation to reduce the incidence of colds in the general population indicates that routine prophylaxis is not justiﬁed. Vitamin C could be useful for people exposed to brief periods of severe physical exercise. While the prophylaxis trials have consistently shown that vitamin C reduces the duration and alleviates the symptoms of colds, this was not replicated in the few therapeutic trials that have been carried out.

“When you're sniffling and sneezing from a cold, you may be tempted to reach for a bottle of vitamin C pills or drink some orange juice. But does vitamin C prevent or treat your symptoms? So far, the evidence is mixed.

What Is It?

Vitamin C is a nutrient your body uses to keep you strong and healthy. It helps maintain your bones, muscles, and blood vessels. It also helps you absorb iron.

Can Vitamin C Prevent or Treat Cold Symptoms?

There have been a lot of studies, but the findings aren't consistent. Overall, experts find little to no benefit if you use vitamin C to prevent or treat a cold.

In 2010, researchers looked at all studies and found that taking vitamin C every day did not prevent the number of colds that a person got. In some cases it made symptoms improve. However, vitamin C didn't help if people took it after they showed signs of getting sick.

The results were different for people who were in extremely good physical condition, such as marathon runners. People like that who took vitamin C every day cut their risk of catching a cold in half.

So what does all this mean?

If you take at least 0.2 grams of vitamin C every day, you're not likely to have fewer colds, but they may end a day or two quicker.

Is It Safe?

In general, vitamin C won't harm you if you get it by eating food like fruits and veggies. For most people, it's also OK if you take supplements in the recommended amount.

Talk to your doctor if you're thinking of taking vitamin C pills and let him know about any other dietary supplements you use.”

WebMD Medical Reference Reviewed by Neha Pathak, MD on January 17, 2017

“At the very first sign of cold symptoms, many people reach for Vitamin C, whether in supplements, juices, cough drops, tea, or other forms.

Vitamin C was first touted for the common cold in the 1970s. But despite its widespread use, experts say there's very little proof that vitamin C actually has any effect on the common cold.

What Is Vitamin C?

Vitamin C is an important vitamin and antioxidant that the body uses to keep you strong and healthy. Vitamin C is used in the maintenance of bones, muscle, and blood vessels. Vitamin C also assists in the formation of collagen and helps the body absorb iron.

Can Vitamin C Prevent or Treat Cold Symptoms?

Vitamin C has been studied for many years as a possible treatment for colds, or as a way to help prevent colds. But findings have been inconsistent. Overall, experts have found little to no benefit from vitamin C for preventing or treating the common cold.

So what does all this mean?

According to this research, the average adult who suffers with a cold for 12 days a year would still suffer for about 11 days a year if that person took a high dose of vitamin C every day during that year.

For the average child who suffers about 28 days of cold illness a year, taking daily high-dose vitamin C would still likely mean about 24 days of cold illness.

When vitamin C was tested for treatment of colds in 7 separate studies, it was found to be no more effective than placebo at shortening the duration of cold symptoms.

Is Vitamin C Safe to Take?

In general, vitamin C is safe to take when ingested through food sources such as fruits and vegetables. For most people, taking vitamin C supplements in the recommended amounts is also safe. The RDA or recommended daily allowance is 90 mg for men and 75 mg for women. High doses of vitamin C (greater than 2000 milligrams per day for adults) may cause kidney stones, nausea, and diarrhea.

If you're unsure about taking vitamin C for colds, talk to your health care provider.”

WebMD Medical Reference Reviewed by Jennifer Robinson, MD on January 20, 2017