

advertisement

WebMD SYMPTOM CHECKER

Check your symptoms here

- [Skin](#)
- [Nose/Mouth](#)
- [Arm/Hand](#)
- [Buttocks](#)
- [Head/Neck](#)
- [Chest](#)
- [Abdomen](#)
- [Leg/Foot](#)
- [Eyes/Ears](#)
- [Back](#)
- [Male Groin](#)
- [Other Symptoms](#)



WebMDHealth

Search

WebMD Today

- [Home](#)
- [WebMD News Center](#)
- [XML News via RSS](#)

Member Services

- [Newsletters & Alerts](#)
- [Boards & Events](#)
- [WebMD University](#)
- [My WebMD](#)
- [Find a Physician](#)

Medical Info

- [Diseases & Conditions](#)
- [Check Symptoms](#)
- [Medical Library](#)
- [Drugs & Herbs](#)
- [Health Tools](#)
- [Clinical Trials](#)
- [Medicare Rx Benefits](#)
- [Health Plan](#)

Health & Wellness

- [Women, Men, Lifestyle](#)
- [Pregnancy & Family](#)
- [Diet & Nutrition](#)

Who We Are

- [About WebMD](#)
- [Privacy & You](#)
- [Site Map](#)

Join now!

[Sign In](#) [FREE Newsletters](#) [Print Friendly Version](#) [Email a Friend](#)

[sponsored](#)

Featured Centers

- [Play SleepSweeps](#)
- [Nighttime GERD](#)
- [Get Vitamins 50% Off](#)
- [Pregnant? Get Gifts.](#)

No Sign that Echinacea Prevents, Treats Colds

Researchers Stop Short of Completely Dismissing Echinacea

By [Miranda Hitti](#)

WebMD Medical News

Reviewed By [Michael Smith, MD](#)

on Wednesday, July 27, 2005

July 27, 2005 -- The herbal remedy echinacea may not live up to its reputation for fighting colds.

Echinacea was tested against the common cold virus in healthy college students. Apparently, the herbal remedy flunked. It didn't seem to prevent or treat colds.

The report appears in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. The researchers included Ronald Turner, MD, of the University of Virginia's medical school.

About Echinacea

Echinacea has traditionally been used to treat or prevent colds, flu, and other infections, states the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) on its web site.

Some people may swear by echinacea.

advertisement

Your body is unique

Find out with our **FREE Vitamin Profile!**

LifeScript. Height: [Click Here](#)

Female Male

More From WebMD

- [Vitamin C May Not Fight the Common Cold](#)
- [Get the Antioxidant Advantage](#)
- [Sign Up for the Living Better Newsletter](#)

Health Mall

Featured Sponsor Centers:

- • [Nighttime GERD](#)
- • [Bipolar Rx Info](#)
- • [Migraine Therapy](#)
- • [Can't Sleep?](#)
- • [Epilepsy Help](#)
- • [Having a Baby?](#)
- • [Free Vitamin Profile](#)

- • [Our Sponsors](#)

However, scientific studies of echinacea have had mixed results, write Turner and colleagues. And some recent studies have [not supported the use of echinacea to fight colds](#).

There were more than 200 clinical reports of echinacea studies between 1950 and 1991, writes Wallace Sampson, MD, in a journal editorial. "Most of these were of small, inadequately controlled European studies sponsored by industry," writes Sampson.

Sampson is an emeritus clinical professor of medicine at Stanford University's medical school and the editor of the *Scientific Review of Alternative Medicine*.

According to the NCCAM, studies show that echinacea does not appear to prevent colds or other infections or shorten the course of colds or flu.

However, the World Health Organization (WHO) has endorsed echinacea for the treatment of the common cold.

About the Study

Commercial [echinacea products vary in their recipes and manufacturing](#), write Turner and colleagues.

The researchers used the extract endorsed by the WHO -- *Echinacea angustifolia*. Some commercial echinacea products use different parts of the plant.

For seven days, about 400 healthy college students got a tincture of echinacea (three times daily at 300 milligrams) or a fake preparation (placebo). They didn't know which one they got.

Then, the cold virus (rhinovirus) was injected into the noses of the students. Afterward, each took echinacea or a placebo while isolated in separate hotel rooms.

No Benefits Seen

Cold symptoms were recorded throughout the study. Nasal samples were also tested. Blood tests were done three weeks later to check for antibodies to the virus.

Echinacea didn't prevent or treat colds, write the researchers. They note that more than 90% of the students used at least 80% of their medication.

Closing the Door?

The report stops short of dismissing echinacea.

It's "conceivable" that other chemicals in echinacea are important, write the researchers. It's also "possible, although unlikely" that echinacea works on other respiratory viruses, they add.

"Given the great variety of echinacea preparations, it will be difficult to provide conclusive evidence that echinacea has no role in the treatment of the common cold," write the researchers.

"Our study, however, adds to the accumulating evidence that suggests that the burden of proof should lie with those who advocate this treatment."

Tell your doctor about any herbal products or other supplements you take. Some supplements can interfere with other medications you may be taking and can cause increased side effects or a change in how your medication works.

advertisement

Be prepared.
Your WebMD Personal Health Record has all your health information in one place and immediately available.
FREE trial offer
WebMD Health Manager

SOURCES: Turner, R. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, July 28, 2005; vol 353: pp 341-348. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine: "Herbs at a Glance: Echinacea." WebMD Medical News: "[Echinacea Doesn't Help Children's Colds.](#)" Sampson, W. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, July 28, 2005; vol 353: pp 337-339. WebMD Medical News: "[Echinacea Products Often Not As Promised.](#)"



[Print Friendly Version](#)



[Email a Friend](#)

Related Links

- [No Sign that Echinacea Prevents, Treats Colds](#)
- [Information and support is available here.](#)
- [Read the top health news of the day.](#)

© 2005 WebMD Inc. All rights reserved.

Search

[Medscape for Physicians](#) | [Medscape for Healthcare Professionals](#)
[Corporate](#) | [Contact Us](#)
[Terms and Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy and Agreement](#)

©1996-2005 WebMD Inc. All rights reserved.

