

Aged garlic may ease cold symptoms

March 12 2012, By Drs. Kay Judge and Maxine Barish-Wreden

Cold and flu symptoms have a significant impact on our economy.

Americans spend close to \$3 billion dollars a year on over-the-counter [cold medications](#), and roughly \$400 million on prescription meds. On top of that, lost revenues from work absence are estimated at about \$20 billion.

Finding ways to prevent colds and flu, or to at least minimize their symptoms or duration, can save both time and money.

Several botanical supplements are commonly used to prevent and treat colds. One of them is garlic, which contains multiple phytochemicals that stimulate the immune system to help fight off unwanted viruses and other germs.

A new study from the University of Florida published in the journal [Clinical Nutrition](#) suggests that aged garlic tablets can help to reduce the length and severity of the common cold.

In this study, 120 people were randomized to receive either a [placebo pill](#) or 2.6 grams per day of an aged garlic extract for 90 days. All participants kept diaries of any cold symptoms.

After 45 days, blood tests were done to measure [immune system function](#). The folks taking the garlic were found to have more robust growth of two types of [immune cells](#) that are key players in the body's defense against germs and tumors - [natural killer cells](#) and gamma-delta

T lymphocytes.

After 90 days of taking the supplements, the illness diaries of the participants showed that while there was no significant difference in the incidence of colds and flu between the people taking the garlic and those taking the placebo pill, the folks taking the garlic supplement reported 21 percent fewer [cold symptoms](#), 61 percent fewer days in which their overall function was sub-optimal, and 58 percent fewer days of work or school missed because of illness.

The aged garlic extract used in this study is called Kyolic and comes from the Wakunaga company, which funded the study along with the University of Florida.

Another randomized study looking at garlic supplements in cold prevention showed a significant reduction in the number of occurrences of the common cold.

In this trial, 146 volunteers were randomized to receive either a garlic supplement or a placebo for 12 weeks. There were 24 incidences of the common cold in the group receiving the garlic compared to 65 in the placebo group.

In addition, the folks getting the garlic reported only 111 days of illness, compared to 366 days of illness in the placebo group.

Of course, in your effort to reduce the number of colds you get every year, don't forget to get plenty of sleep, keep up your healthy diet, exercise daily, and take your vitamin D.

And rinsing your nasal passages and gargling with some warm salt water every day can help wash away viruses or bacteria before they have a chance to penetrate into the body and cause mischief in the first place.

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