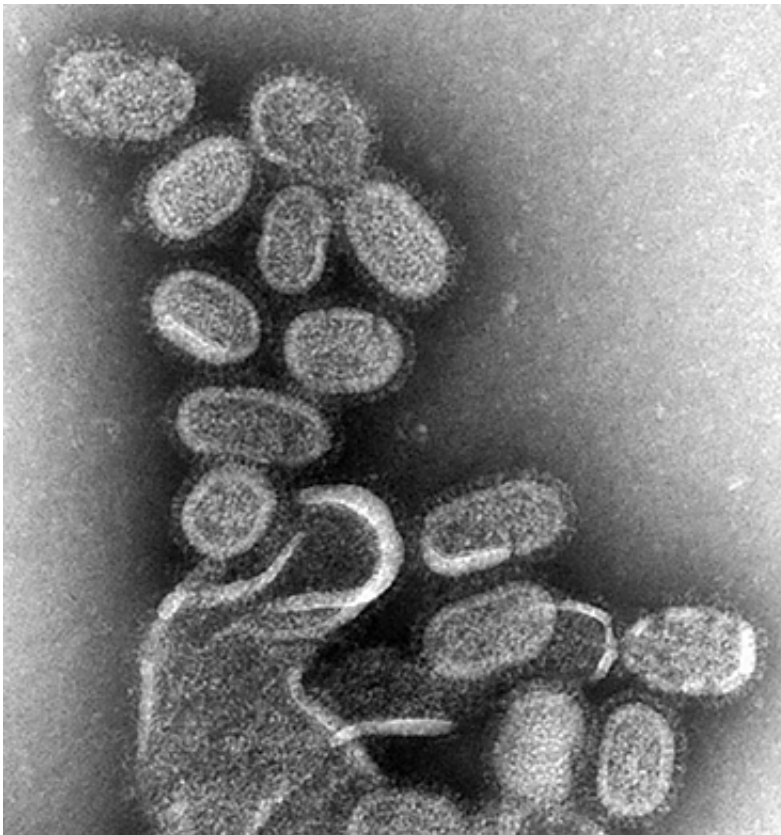


Acetaminophen provides no benefits against the flu

December 7 2015



Electron microscopy of influenza virus. Credit: CDC

Some doctors may recommend that patients with the flu take acetaminophen, or paracetamol, to relieve their symptoms; however, a new randomized clinical trial found no benefits to the over-the-counter medication in terms of fighting the influenza virus or reducing patients'

temperature or other symptoms.

The trial included adults between 18 and 65 years of age with confirmed influenza infections who were treated with the maximum recommended dose of paracetamol or placebo for five days. Participants were monitored for up to 14 days.

"We initially theorized that taking paracetamol might be harmful, as the influenza virus cannot replicate as well at higher temperatures, and by reducing a person's temperature the virus may have thrived. Fortunately this was found not be the case," said Dr. Irene Braithwaite, co-author of the *Respirology* study. "In this study, paracetamol was not harmful, but we also found that paracetamol was not beneficial either."

Dr. Braithwaite noted that it is difficult to make a recommendation for or against the use of [paracetamol](#) in adults with influenza or influenza-like illness based on these results. "One of the things we need to take from this, though, is that those at risk—particularly pregnant women, the very young, the old, and those with chronic medical conditions—should have the annual influenza vaccination as it confers the best protection available against the [influenza virus](#)."

More information: Sarah Jefferies et al. Randomized controlled trial of the effect of regular paracetamol on influenza infection, *Respirology* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/resp.12685](https://doi.org/10.1111/resp.12685)

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