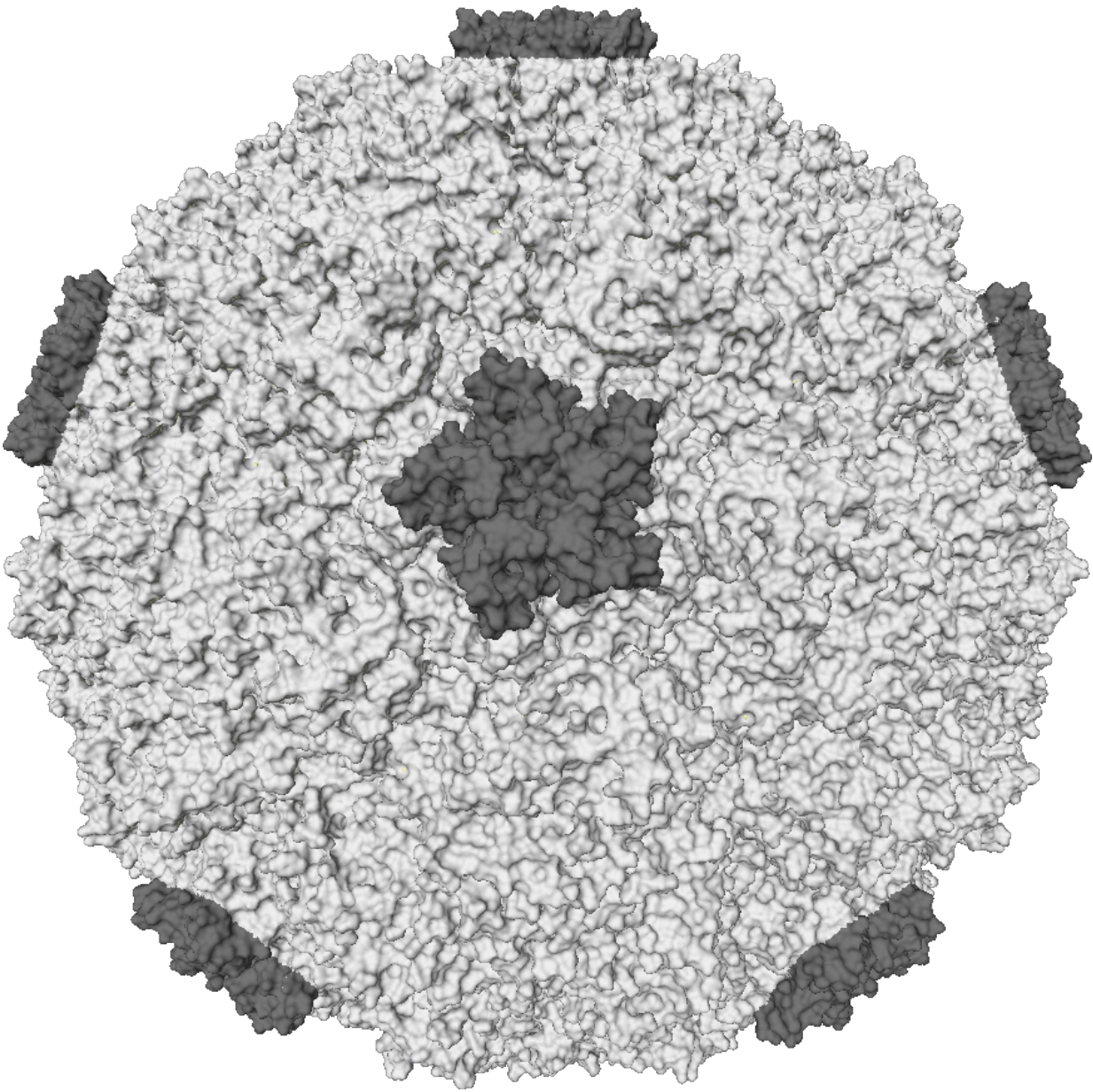


Do home remedies for the common cold really work?

November 1 2016, by Seema Yasmin, The Dallas Morning News



A representation of the molecular surface of one variant of human rhinovirus.
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Kids have an average of six to eight colds each year and adults have two to four. Which home remedies do you use for colds and do you know if they really work? News that a homeopathic teething remedy has caused the deaths of at least 10 children has raised questions about the safety and effectiveness of alternative medicines for treating common problems.

VITAMIN C

Vitamin C was first mentioned as a treatment for the cold in the 1970s. Since then it's been studied in dozens of trials. Some have found that if taken daily before you catch a cold, vitamin C can decrease the severity of symptoms such as sore throat and runny nose.

It's also been found to shorten the duration of colds by about 10 percent if taken soon after symptoms begin. That means the 12 days of feeling sick from a cold that adults typically experiences each year could be reduced to about 11 days with the help of vitamin C. However, in some studies where vitamin C is compared to a [placebo pill](#), [people](#) taking vitamin C are no better off than people taking a placebo.

Vitamin C is found in citrus fruits and berries. The recommended daily dose is 90 mg for men and 75 mg for women. Some people take a higher dose, especially during cold season, but doses higher than 2000 mg per day have been linked to stomach problems and kidney stones.

ECHINACEA

The jury is still out on the effectiveness of echinacea, a flowering herb which is made into tinctures and teas and commonly used to combat colds. Some studies show it boosts the number of white cells which could mean a stronger immune response to infections. But other studies find [echinacea](#) doesn't really do much.

It seems the worst that can happen with echinacea is an allergic reaction that causes a rash and in some people, serious anaphylactic shock. A more common side effect of the herb is an upset stomach. Echinacea can cause liver problems if combined with heart medicines such as amiodarone.

ZINC

A study published in 2011 found [zinc supplements](#) shortened the duration of a cold and reduced the number of days kids skipped school because of illness. The study reviewed the results of 15 experiments and found taking zinc also cut the use of antibiotics.

Some of the studies showed zinc only seemed to work if taken within the first day of symptoms. People who took supplements soon after they fell ill were sick for one day less than those who took a placebo pill.

Again, there are mixed results on the effectiveness of this supplement. A 2009 study found there simply wasn't enough evidence to recommend [zinc](#) as a way to prevent and treat colds.

Zinc may interfere with one of the most common causes of the cold - rhinoviruses. The supplement has been found to stop rhinoviruses from replication and could block the virus from latching on to human cells.

GARLIC

Some small studies found garlic supplements reduced the number of colds a person experienced and quickened the pace at which they recovered from a cold. But these were studies of only a few hundred people.

A larger analysis which grouped together the results of eight experiments found there was not enough evidence to say that garlic wards off colds. Garlic breath might ward off people which could be one way of staying germ-free during [cold](#) season.

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