



## THE HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS INFORMATION SERVICE COMMENTS ON GARLIC AND THE COMMON COLD

**July 7<sup>th</sup> 2009** – A Cochrane review published today looking at garlic and the common cold was suggestive of benefit, which is great news for all cold sufferers. <sup>1</sup>

The common cold is associated with inconvenient and unpleasant symptoms, such as runny nose, sore throat, sneezing and headaches and can lead to loss of productivity in terms of days off work. Unfortunately, no cure has yet been found for the common cold.

Looking at this new study itself, it is important to point out that this Cochrane review included only one study that fitted the reviewers' criteria, and which they considered to have strong enough data for inclusion. The included study found a large beneficial effect. It included 146 patients randomly assigned to take garlic supplements or placebo for 12 weeks.

There was a dramatic reduction in the number of colds. Only 24 of the patients taking garlic supplements reported coming down with a cold, compared with 65 of the people taking the placebo tablet.

In this study, the number of days people were sick, if they caught a cold, was reduced by more than half – decreasing from five days to less than two.

Trials evaluating garlic go back to the 1970s and before, but the data presented in the past have made it hard to reach conclusions. In addition, the mechanisms of action of garlic remain unclear. Garlic contains hundreds of compounds, the effects of which, have not yet been fully characterised.

This Cochrane review shows the need for more laboratory based studies on garlic compounds and their effects on colds and other viruses. Once such studies have clearly defined the mechanisms, compounds, doses and the bioavailability, then quality controlled clinical trials should be carried out.

In the meantime, this randomised controlled clinical trial included in the Cochrane review does suggest benefit and as a result offers a positive basis from which to conduct more research.

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<sup>1</sup> Lissiman E et al. Cochrane Review July 7, 2009