

# Alcohol "can't be dismissed

*It's now the season of the common cold, that most uncommonly discomforting disease, and scientists — at last — have discovered a cure for it. But until it becomes available at the corner drugstore, the best we can do is fight off these colds with the best current therapies. Lowell Ponte, a veteran science and medical journalist, has conducted exhaustive research for this series on colds. Following is the last of five articles.*

**By Lowell Ponte**  
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**SANTA MONICA, Calif.** — What steps can you take to protect yourself and others from colds this season?

Scientists offer the following checklist of advice, some of it old, some new:

- Take vitamin C. It works, says Dr. Terence W. Anderson, head of the public health department at the University of British Columbia — the scientist who has done the most complete and most respected trials of vitamin C as a cold treatment. He recommends you take 100 to 150 milligrams of extra vitamin C daily when well and boost the dose to 500 milligrams during the first days of a cold. This has been proven to slightly reduce your chances of catching cold and greatly improve your ability to fight off any cold you do get.

Other scientists have found individual vitamin C needs vary, especially in accord with what you do. The body uses vitamin C in cleansing itself of poisons. So those who breathe smoggy air, those who smoke and drink alcohol, use up their body's supply faster than others do.

People under stress, whether from illness or injury or tension, burn up lots more vitamin C in adrenalin. Older people tend to need more vitamin C than younger people.

And needs vary throughout the year. October is the month when most people's vitamin C reserves are at their lowest as stress grows, daylight shortens, and we switch diets from summer fruits and vegetables to winter meat and potatoes.

Women in their child-bearing years catch far more colds than do men, apparently because the vitamin C rises and falls in their blood during the monthly hormone cycle. Taking vitamin C reduces colds in women much more than in men. And women taking birth control pills, all else being equal, have only half as much vitamin C in their bloodstreams as do women not taking them.

You should weigh such factors in considering how much vitamin C to take. If you have questions or concerns, ask your doctor.

- Drink liquids. Water and diluted fruit juices will not cure you, but they will prevent dehydration and help nourish you. Better are

hot liquids such as tea, hot apple juice, and broth . . . things that warm rather than cool your body. One of the best treatments scientists have found for nasal mucus during a cold is — believe it or not — fresh hot chicken soup. This evidence comes from studies by Dr. Marin A. Sackner of Mount Sinai Medical Centre in Miami Beach, Fla. Dr. Sackner recommends a dose be given to cold sufferers every 30 minutes for maximum benefit. Keep your body well-nourished.

- Use a humidifier or vaporizer in home and office. The dry air of overheated buildings irritates the lining of your nose and increases vulnerability to virus attack. Cold viruses thrive, moreover, when air is dry but weaken when the air in a room is at or above 50 per cent humidity.

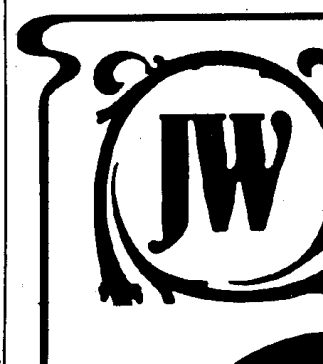
Many doctors recommend cold sufferers inhale steam, as hot as they can endure without burning the nose, from a vaporizer or kettle of hot water. This does the job a fever tries to do in the body, making nasal passages a fatally hot and moist place for cold viruses.

According to the Weizmann Institute in Israel, a patented water-vaporizing device manufactured by one kibbutz can remedy 85 per cent of colds after only two treatments. Based on research into the virus-killing effects of fever done by Nobel-laureate Israeli physicist Dr. Andre Lwoff, this

device — which precisely mixes air, water and temperature — may be on the market late this winter with a price tag well above \$200.

- Think twice before taking aspirin. Aspirin will ease pains, reduce fever, and slightly open breathing passages. When you have a cold, aspirin and vitamin C will enhance each other's effects in your body (but when you are well, scientists find, aspirin destroys vitamin C in the body). Keep in mind, however, the one-degree fever typical of colds is the body's way of fighting viral invaders and, in experiments, scientists have found taking aspirin makes you more infectious to those nearby. If you prefer an alternative medication, then

- Consider drinking alcohol. It will not kill many germs, and it will use up some of your body's vitamin C. But according to the late Dr. Noah Fabricant, renowned specialist on colds, a few shots of liquor will ease your pains, relax you and stimulate blood circulation in your mucus membranes. The red nose associated with drunks, Dr. Fabricant's research



# missed" when battling a cold

found, is a warm nose, a nose able to repel viruses. The benefits of booze to cold victims, the good doctor wrote, "can neither be minimized nor dismissed." A hot toddy can help you.

• Use cold medicines with caution. Most such medications will suppress some symptoms of a cold but may prolong the cold, both by reducing the body's defences such as fever and by prompting the cold sufferer to stay on the job. By continuing to work, you cause stress that slows healing and makes the body vulnerable to worse infections such as pneumonia. You infect co-workers. And you risk death if you try to drive an automobile while under the distorting, sleep-inducing influence of antihistamines, codeine, and other common ingredients of cold pills and sprays. Also avoid taking antibiotics, which do nothing to kill cold viruses but which, with each use, build your body's resistance to the antibiotic you may someday need to cure germ-caused illness . . . and then may be unable to fight.

It is healthier for

everybody if you put your cold to bed in a warm, quiet, humid room and keep it there until at least a day after you feel recovered — lest you suffer a relapse.

• Use lots of paper tissues. Unless thus muffled, your every sneeze will fill your surroundings with an invisible cloud of tens of thousands of disease-carrying droplets that can spread your cold to others. When blowing your nose, blow gently and repeatedly; hard blowing will merely force mucus into your ear canals and infect them, too.

In a 1979 experiment at a U.S. base in Antarctica, University of

Wisconsin virologist Dr. Elliott C. Dick found the spreading of cold infections virtually could be halted by careful use of "killer Kleenexes" treated with virus-killing iodine. Although not yet practical for common use because such iodine dissipates hours after a treated box of tissues is opened, this experiment showed what doctors have long recommended — by isolating cold viruses through careful use of tissues and by keeping the dishes, utensils, and other virus-carrying items touched by the cold victim away from others, the spread of colds can be limited.

• And, of course, if symptoms persist or become severe, see your doctor. The common cold can mask or lead to more dangerous diseases, including brain fever, heart fever, and pneumonia. In the past month and a half at least three children in San Diego, Calif., have died from what doctors described as a "cold-like virus." Never underestimate the potential seriousness of a cold. Over the centuries this most common of diseases has contributed to the deaths of millions of people.

Ours is an amazing moment in history.

After a million years of sneezes, sniffles, coughs and pneumonia, humankind is on the verge of conquering the common cold. But until Interferon medicine is tested for safety and is available to all — by the year 1990 or so, it is hoped — we must each fight that ancient battle for a few seasons more with the best tools and advice science can offer.

Our chances never have been better.

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