

## Vitamin C During Cold and Flu Season

Now that October is here, cold and flu season is just around the corner. During this time of year, many people look to the supplement section to prevent or treat a variety of seasonal-related disorders. One common over-the-counter supplement is vitamin C.

Vitamin C, also known as ascorbic acid, is a water-soluble vitamin that is necessary for the formation of collagen in bones, cartilage, muscle, and blood vessels. Dietary sources of vitamin C include fruits and vegetables, particularly citrus fruits, such as oranges. It is commonly used to prevent or treat vitamin C deficiency and improve iron absorption. Some people also claim that it can prevent and treat symptoms of the common cold.

The evidence for vitamin C supplementation for cold symptoms is controversial. Vitamin C does not appear to prevent anyone from developing a cold. However, there is some evidence that it may reduce the duration and severity of symptoms of a cold. Most research shows a resolution of cold symptoms 1-2 days sooner with vitamin C. There is also some evidence that it may be more effective at treating cold symptoms in children than in adults, as well as reducing the number of colds in people who experience a high level of physical stress.

Usual doses of vitamin C for treatment of cold symptoms range from 200 to 2000 mg daily. Evidence suggests that higher doses may be more effective, but exceeding doses of 2000 mg increases the risk of developing side effects. Common side effects include diarrhea, stomach upset, nausea, vomiting, and flushing.

Vitamin C does not prevent or treat flu symptoms. Getting your annual flu shot is the best way to protect yourself from the flu. Flu shots are currently available, no appointment necessary.

If you have any questions regarding vitamin C, the common cold, or the flu, see one of our pharmacists here at Dexter Pharmacy or visit [Cold remedies: What works, what doesn't, what can't hurt](http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/common-cold/in-depth/cold-remedies/art-20046403?pg=1) (<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/common-cold/in-depth/cold-remedies/art-20046403?pg=1>) for more information.

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