

## Viral Upper Respiratory Infection (Common Cold)

### **Background:**

URI has been the frustration of both patients and physicians for centuries. Despite modern medicine there are very few effective therapies despite Billions of dollars being spent each year. Unfortunately, the most commonly recommended or prescribed medications not only have little effect but may also have serious side effects. Despite it being known for decades that antibiotics have no effect, patients still have an expectation of antibiotic therapy and physicians commonly make the mistake of prescribing them.

### **Medical Evidence:**

Despite thousands of medical studies, NOTHING has been shown to be DEFINITELY more effective than nothing at all. However, there are a number of therapies that have shown promise. Ultimately it comes down to what may help and at the same time is the safest.

- **Over the Counter pharmaceuticals:** Oral *anti-histamines* have been shown to decrease nasal congestion but may cause drowsiness. Oral *decongestants* also have been shown to help with congestion but may lead to insomnia, palpitations or elevated blood pressure.
- **Botanicals (herbal preparations):** *Andrographis* has shown consistent evidence on decreasing symptoms of a cold with little or no side effects. Dose is 5-20mg of extract up to 3 times a day for the first few days. *Echinacea* has shown better evidence for prevention than treatment but may shorten symptom time if taken the first few days. Astragalus, chamomile, garlic, ginger and ginseng have not shown to be of benefit but are generally safe. *Goldenseal* does not show any benefit and interacts with many prescription medications therefore I do not recommend it.
- **Supplements:** *Beta Glucans* have been shown consistently to boost the immune system and may shorten the period of symptoms. *Vitamin C* (200-500mg daily) has shown mixed results but is very safe and may be helpful. Large doses are not necessary. *Zinc* has mixed results but may be of benefit. Side effects may include nausea and bad taste. *Honey* has been shown in some studies to be as effective as other cough suppressants and is safe for anyone *over the age of 1yr*. A teaspoonful may be added to tea.

### **Prevention:**

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

- Good hand washing
- Avoidance or limiting contact with those that are ill.
- Get adequate sleep and regular exercise
- Avoid smoking and alcohol.
- During high risk times, you may consider vitamin C, Echinacea and andrographis

--Dr Kalsman