Zinc and Colds

What is Zinc?

Zinc is a necessary mineral that supports your body's cells, helping them grow, replicate, and repair themselves. It also plays an important role in your immune system, helping it to effectively combat infections and illnesses.

Zinc and Upper Respiratory Tract Infections

Research suggests that zinc may help to reduce the duration and severity of colds, which are often caused by upper respiratory tract infections. It appears to work by stopping the virus from multiplying and may also soothe symptoms like a sore throat.

How Should Zinc Be Used?

- **For treatment of colds:** Start taking zinc tablets, lozenges or syrup within 24 hours of the start of your symptoms. Continuing for the duration of the illness, usually 5-7 days.

- The commonly recommended amount of zinc is 75mg per day, split into multiple doses. This can be achieved through lozenges, syrups or supplements. However, do not exceed this amount unless instructed by a healthcare professional.

Potential Side Effects and Risks

Zinc is generally safe for most people when used in the recommended amounts, but it can cause side effects, particularly if taken in high doses.

- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, metallic taste, kidney and stomach damage, and other side effects can occur if zinc is taken in high doses.
- Long-term use of high-dose zinc is linked to a decrease in copper status and weakened immune function.
- Zinc nasal sprays have been associated with a loss of sense of smell.

Key Points

- Always follow your GP's advice regarding zinc supplements.
- While zinc can be a helpful tool in reducing the duration and severity of a cold, it is not a substitute for a balanced diet, regular exercise, good sleep hygiene, and other essential health practices.

This information is intended for general informational purposes and should not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice. If you have any health concerns, please see your healthcare provider.

Last updated: May 2023

Copyright © Jimmy Tseng 2023