



The common cold fact file

Eating to avoid colds

Many people eat more oranges to avoid getting a cold. Oranges are a good source of vitamin C, which boosts the immune system and so may help prevent colds. However, vitamin C has never been proven to prevent colds. What you really need to do is consume extra vitamin A, so eat more carrots, spinach, milk, eggs and liver. Eating chocolate might make you feel happier, but it won't help you avoid a cold!

Preventative action

The cold virus can live for up to two hours on door handles, towels, telephones, etc. If you touch these things and then touch your eyes or nose, the cold virus will enter your body. So one of the best ways to prevent a cold is to wash your hands regularly. Another way to prevent a cold is to not worry and be happy. People under stress get more colds. A vaccination will give good protection against flu for a year, but there is no vaccine yet against the 250 viruses that cause the common cold. Regular saunas are also recommended. People in Sweden who have saunas twice a week have been shown to have fewer colds.

Cold remedies

When you have a cold, consuming hot foods and liquids will kill off the virus in your nose and mouth. That also includes hot, spicy food which contains chilli powder. Hot chicken soup is recommended. What you should not do is eat dairy products, because milk feeds the mucus in your nose. Drops of eucalyptus or menthol will also help. Some traditional cold remedies do not work. Garlic has many health benefits but doesn't give protection against a cold. Extra vitamin C won't help you either. And while a cheeseburger with large fries might be your idea of food heaven, it won't cure your cold!

Get well soon

If you want to recover from a cold quickly, you should not use a cloth handkerchief, because it is a perfect place for germs to breed. A good thing to do is to inhale steam by putting your head over a bowl of hot water with a towel over your head for about 15 minutes a day. The cold virus is very sensitive to high temperatures, and the steam will help kill the virus. And contrary to what most people think, going to bed and sleeping a lot is not a good idea. Light exercise and fresh air are much better ways to fight a cold.

