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*With cold and flu season approaching, nutrition plays an important role in helping prevent or reduce the incidence and severity of seasonal illness. Research shows that a good multivitamin and extra vitamin E can reduce the incidence of upper respiratory tract infections, especially in the elderly.*

## VITAMIN E AND RESPIRATORY TRACT INFECTIONS

Respiratory illnesses, including the common cold, can be debilitating and lead to complications and death in the elderly. A study published in the August 18, 2004, issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association found vitamin E to be protective against upper respiratory infections.

Four hundred fifty-one individuals aged 65 and older at 33 long-term care facilities completed a course of 200 IU of vitamin E per day or a placebo from April 1998 to August 2001. In addition, all of the subjects received a multivitamin that provided 50 percent of the recommended daily allowance for essential vitamins and minerals. The incidence of lower respiratory infections, such as acute bronchitis and pneumonia, and upper respiratory tract infections, including cold, influenza, sore throat, middle ear infection and sinusitis, was documented over the course of the trial.

The subjects who received vitamin E acquired fewer respiratory tract infections than those who did not receive the vitamin. Participants who received the vitamin experienced a 20 percent decreased risk of acquiring the common cold, which accounted for 84 percent of the upper respiratory infections reported. In addition, participants taking vitamin E had fewer colds per person. Although vitamin E showed no significant effect on lower respiratory tract infections, the protective effect of vitamin E supplementation on upper respiratory tract infections observed in this group merits further investigation and suggests important implications for the well-being of the elderly.

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