

IS YOUR COLD REMEDY A RIP-OFF?

In a recent study fewer than half the herbal cold remedies tested contained a proper dose of the ingredients they advertise. Before you head to the drugstore, learn **WHICH ONES ARE WORTH THE MONEY**. *By Jamie Beckman*

MEDICAL SCIENCE MAY BE ABLE TO KEEP THE AVERAGE American alive for 77.9 years, but it still can't cure the common cold, which prompts more doctor visits in the U.S. than any other illness. And many who turn to natural remedies to help cure or prevent colds aren't getting the help they're looking for. Recently Dr. Tod Cooperman of the independent research firm Consumerlab.com tested several brands of zinc, echinacea, ginseng, vitamin C, and garlic supplements to find out whether the products actually contained a meaningful dose of the advertised cold-busting ingredient. The results? Only 42 percent of the herbals tested measured up. Some products, among them Spring Valley Ginseng Complex (sold at Wal-Mart), even contained lead, enough in Spring Valley's case to



The majority of remedies tested failed.

merit a California warning label. (The maker says their testing shows lead levels in a safe range.) "There is a lot of bad news here for consumers," says Cooperman. Sunkist Zinc Throat Lozenges with Vitamin C and Echinacea was one that came up short. Tests showed that each lozenge contained the 5 mg of zinc and 5 mg of echinacea that the label claims, but that's far short of the 9–24 mg of zinc and 2,000 mg of echinacea widely recommended. A Sunkist spokesperson said the low zinc content lets you take the lozenges throughout the day with less chance of getting a zinc-induced stomachache. Fair enough — but you'd have to take 400 lozenges to get a full dose of echinacea. It should be said that the science on herbal supplements is mixed. Even so, no one likes to get ripped off.

FIVE PILLS THAT PASSED | Natural cold-fighting options that stand up to scrutiny

PURITAN'S PRIDE NATURAL WHOLE HERB ECHINACEA

(\$7; puritan.com)

Consumerlab confirms that this one exceeds the 2,000-mg dose of echinacea recommended to reduce the length of a cold.

KWAI GARLIC SUPPLEMENT

(\$14; medshopexpress.com)

One daily dose of Kwai yields 3,600 mcg of allicin, a compound found in garlic; regular use may help reduce the number of colds you catch per season.

VITAMIN WORLD KOREAN GINSENG

(\$9; vitaminworld.com)

Ginseng proponents say a daily dose protects you from colds. Consumerlab confirms that Vitamin World's contain at least 1.5 to 2 percent ginsenosides.

NATURE MADE VITAMIN C 1,000 MG

(\$9; walgreens.com)

Vitamin C supplements generally scored well in the test; Cooperman likes Nature Made, which provides the 1,000-mg dose considered most effective.

COLD-EEZE ZINC LOZENGES

(\$6; drugstore.com)

Sucking on a lozenge with 9–24 mg of zinc every two to three hours can cut two days off your cold; Cold-EEZE delivers. Start within two days of the first tickle.