
SECTION B. UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

38. THE COMMON COLD

JACK M. GWALTNEY, JR.

Antibiotics have no place in the treatment of uncomplicated colds, and antihistamines have only a minimal effect in reducing nasal secretions (36). Until truly effective and specific treatment becomes available, there will continue to be fads in the use of unproven cold remedies. The ingestion of large doses of vitamin C has been widely used as a preventive or therapeutic measure for colds. In some instances, controlled studies have shown a modest beneficial effect of vitamin C for colds. However, a careful analysis of the studies has indicated that a placebo effect could not be ruled out. Many participants correctly surmised from the taste of the contents of the capsules used whether they were receiving vitamin C or a placebo (37). In volunteers experimentally infected with rhinovirus, vitamin C in doses of 3 g/day was not effective in preventing infection and illness (38,39).

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