

# Examine.com

## Allergies & Immunity

## Medical Disclaimer & Important Note

This guide is a general health-related information product, intended for healthy adults over the age of 18.

This guide is for educational purposes only. It is not medical advice. Please consult a medical or health professional before you begin any exercise, nutrition, or supplementation program, or if you have questions about your health.

Participating in exercise activities or using products mentioned in this guide may pose risks for people in poor health or with pre-existing physical or mental health conditions.

Do not use any products or participate in any activities if you are in poor health or have a pre-existing mental or physical health condition. If you choose to participate, you do so of your own free will, and you knowingly and voluntarily accept the risks.

While we will mention major known drug interactions, it may be possible for any supplement to interact with medications or other drugs. If you are currently taking medication, consult a health professional prior to using any supplement in this guide.

Specific study results described in this guide should not be considered representative of typical results. Not all supplements provide the exact amount of compounds as listed on the label. Always investigate supplement companies, as well as the supplement itself, before purchasing anything. Herbs, rather than isolated compounds, may also have some variability from one batch to the next that can alter the efficacy.

To read the evidence supporting claims mentioned in this guide, please visit [Examine.com](https://www.examine.com).

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# How to use this Guide

The team at Examine.com has been publishing research on nutrition and supplementation since March 2011. In that time, we've learned a great deal about supplements, especially how they can work together to help you with health goals.

This stack guide help you figure out which supplements can help you and which will hinder and/or be a waste of your money for your desired goals.

The following four sections present information on supplements that are relevant to *Allergies & Immunity*:

1. Base Supplements
2. Proven Options
3. Unproven Options
4. Cautionary and Overhyped Options

**Base Supplements** are recommended for the majority of people with this goal. They are either effective on their own or are required to boost the effects of another supplement. These are the first supplements to consider for your stack. Base Supplements are more researched and have less adverse drug interactions than options.

**Proven Options** are supplements that will provide a lot of benefits, but only in the right context. They cannot be recommended for everyone, but if you read the entry and find that you meet the criteria, feel free to add the supplement to your stack.

**Unproven Options** are another group of potentially beneficial supplements, but they lack evidence for their effects. They cannot be recommended with the same confidence as proven options. They could work or be a waste of your money - there is not enough evidence to know for sure. Keep unproven options in mind, but approach them cautiously when incorporating them into your stack.

**Cautionary and Overhyped Options** are supplements that are claimed to provide benefits but have been shown to be ineffective. If a supplement is deemed too risky to be used, it will also be found in this section. **Do not** add these compounds to your stack; they tend to be a waste of money or potentially harmful to your health.

Once we have explained the various supplements that you need to be aware of, the **Assembling your Supplement Stack** section will outline how different supplements can be combined, based on your objectives.

After that, we follow up with the **Stack Modification FAQ**, in which we cover common questions that may arise when assembling your stack.

Lastly, we include information on **Precautions and Troubleshooting**.

With all this combined, you should be able to identify and assemble a supplement stack best suited for your goals and objectives.

## Garlic

### **Why you should take it**

Garlic is a vegetable, traditionally supplemented for its ability to enhance the immune system.

Garlic can improve the ability of white blood cells to destroy invaders, in a process called phagocytosis. It also increases the production of T-cells, another one of the body's defenses.

Due to these two properties, garlic can reduce the risk of infections and the common cold by as much as 60%. Keep in mind, garlic supplementation will not reduce the severity of symptoms or the duration of illness. It is a preventative supplement.

Garlic may interact with several medications, including pharmaceuticals used to treat tuberculosis and HIV. It can also decrease the effectiveness of oral contraceptives. Talk to your doctor about garlic supplementation if you are taking medication, particularly blood thinners like warfarin.

### **How to take it**

Garlic can be supplemented or eaten as a food product. Both methods are effective. People that do not like garlic's taste or smell are recommended to supplement garlic instead of eating it.

Three cloves of garlic, eaten with meals throughout the day, will provide maximum benefits. Garlic can be eaten straight or used in cooking. Garlic must be crushed or cut before it is heated to release the bioactive compounds.

To supplement garlic, take 600 – 1,200 mg of aged garlic extract, split into multiple doses and taken with meals. Aging garlic preserves its benefits while eliminating the scent.

## Vitamin C

### **Why you should take it**

Vitamin C can reduce the duration of illness and the frequency of the common cold if supplemented by very physically active people.

When taken as a daily preventative, vitamin C can ward off the common cold. Taking high doses of vitamin C at the beginning of an illness **will not** reduce the severity of symptoms.

Active people are the most likely to benefit from vitamin C's ability to reduce illness frequency. If you do not regularly exercise, vitamin C supplementation will not prevent you from getting sick.

Vitamin C has the most research done on it in the context of alleviating upper respiratory tract infections, like the common cold.

Like garlic, vitamin C may reduce the effectiveness of some HIV medications. Vitamin C should be supplemented several hours after aluminum-based antacids because it can increase the absorption of iron and aluminum.

### **How to take it**

To supplement vitamin C, take 1,000 – 2,000 mg, in divided doses throughout the day. Further research is needed to determine if vitamin C is more effective when taken with a meal.

## Pelargonium sidoides

### **Why it is a proven option**

*Pelargonium sidoides*, also known as African geranium, is an herb containing compounds called prodelphinidins. Prodelphinidins can prevent bacteria from attaching to the throat and lungs.

Supplementing *Pelargonium sidoides* at the beginning of illnesses characterized by dry and hoarse coughing can reduce symptom severity and the length of the illness. Current evidence suggests *Pelargonium sidoides* supplementation is not capable of actually preventing illness.

*Pelargonium sidoides* supplementation is used primarily to treat acute bronchitis. It has less evidence for treating the common cold.

Further research is needed to determine if taking *Pelargonium sidoides* as a daily preventative supplement is effective.

### **How to take it**

To supplement *Pelargonium sidoides*, take 800 mg of the dry plant weight, which is equivalent to 10 – 30 (10 – 30 drops, or 1.5 – 4.5 mL) mg of the liquid tincture form, assuming a 11% ethanolic extract, or 30 – 90 mg of EPs7630, which is a 8-10:1 concentrated powder.

*Pelargonium sidoides* doses should be split into three daily doses. To supplement *Pelargonium sidoides* capsules, take 10 – 30 mg three times a day.

Supplementation of *Pelargonium sidoides* should begin at the onset of dry respiratory symptoms and continue for up to five days, or until symptoms disappear.

## Tinospora cordifolia

### **Why it is a proven option**

*Tinospora cordifolia*, also known as Guduchi, is an herb used in traditional Indian medicine to stimulate the immune system. *Tinospora cordifolia* supplementation may prevent infections.

*Tinospora cordifolia* is effective at alleviating the symptoms of allergies, like a stuffy nose. Like [garlic](#), *Tinospora cordifolia* can improve the ability of white blood cells to fight invaders. Further research is needed to determine whether garlic and *Tinospora cordifolia* are synergistic if taken together.

## How to take it

To supplement *Tinospora cordifolia*, take 900 mg of a water extract concentrated for 5% bitters, divided into three daily doses of 300 mg.

## Spirulina

### Why it is a proven option

Spirulina is a protein-rich algae that contains several bioactive compounds with anti-inflammatory effects.

Though further research is needed to determine whether spirulina can ward off sickness, it has been shown to be effective at reducing symptoms of nasal allergies.

Low doses of daily spirulina has been shown to alleviate the stuffy nose and sneezing that comes with allergies.

## How to take it

To supplement spirulina, take 2 g daily, for at least twelve weeks. Spirulina can be taken with meals.

## Zinc

### Why it is a proven option

Zinc is an important dietary mineral that can bolster the immune system and protect against the common cold and other infective diseases.

Zinc supplementation, if begun at the first sign of symptoms, has been noted to reduce the length of sickness and may prevent symptoms from getting worse.



The only studies to have found benefits for sick people supplementing zinc use zinc lozenges in high doses, which is a supplemental form of zinc typically used at the first sign of a cold. Supplementing zinc in this way can cause minor nausea and a temporarily disrupted sense of taste. Due to no evidence supporting benefits of zinc nasal spray over lozenges and possible permanent loss of taste from the spray, the spray is not recommended under any condition.

Oral and lozenge supplementation of zinc can reduce the absorption of quinolone and tetracycline antibiotics.

### **How to take it**

To supplement zinc for an acute response to infective sickness, take 75 mg of zinc lozenges, split into several doses throughout the day. Supplementation of this dose should stop as soon as symptoms disappear.

## Echinacea

### **Why it is an unproven option**

Echinacea was one of the first herbs marketed as an immune system booster. Though it is widely used, it does not have a lot of consistent evidence for its effects.

Echinacea supplementation can reduce the risk of upper respiratory tract infection, and can reduce the length of sickness if taken as a daily preventative. However, these effects are unreliable.

Echinacea contains a variety of bioactive compounds called alkylamides. Though these compounds have similar functions, much more research is needed to determine how they interact and what effects they have on the immune system.

Though echinacea supplementation can be effective, much more research is needed before it can be specifically recommended for allergy and immunity-related supplementation.

Echinacea may interact with many drugs. Talk to your doctor about supplementing echinacea if you are currently prescribed medication. Do not supplement echinacea if you are taking immunosuppressive medications.

### **How to take it**

To supplement echinacea, take 300 – 500 mg, three times a day, for a total daily dose of 900 – 1,500. To supplement using a liquid tincture, take 2.5 – 10 ml, three times a day, for a total daily dose of 7.5 – 30 ml.

More research is needed to determine the optimal dose of echinacea, and to determine if it is more effective when taken with food or on an empty stomach.

# Cautionary & Overhyped Options

*There are no overhyped supplements to caution against.*

# Assembling Your Supplement Stack

The following outlines how to incorporate this supplement stack into your daily nutrition habits.

## Incorporating Base Supplements

The base supplements in the Allergies & Immunity stack include **garlic** (1 clove, or 200 – 400 mg, three times a day) and **vitamin C** (500 mg, three times a day), taken with meals.

## Incorporating Supplement Options

**For people suffering from the first signs of a respiratory sickness, characterized by a dry throat and a hoarse voice**

Take the base **garlic** and **vitamin C**, as described above, throughout the duration of the illness. Add *Pelargonium sidoides* (90 mg, or 30 mL), taken three times a day until symptoms disappear.

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**For people at the onset of illness**

Take the base **garlic** and **vitamin C**, as described above, throughout the duration of the illness. Add **zinc** lozenges (75 mg) until symptoms disappear. Zinc supplementation should cease as soon as symptoms disappear.

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**For people with chronic stuffy nose**

If the base **garlic** and **vitamin C**, taken as described above, do not alleviate nasal issues, add **spirulina** (2 g). If, after a month of supplementation, symptoms persist, add *Tinospora cordifolia* (300 mg), taken three times a day.

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## Other Options

**Echinacea** is not included in any stack because it is not reliable and lacks evidence for its effects.

## How do I add supplements to my stack that are not covered in this guide?

Before adding a new supplement to your stack, supplement your current stack for a few weeks to determine if you need to make a new addition. If you want to make multiple changes to your stack, pick one supplement to add at a time. Identify the stack change that you think will be the most effective, and do your research:

1. Use [Examine.com](https://www.examine.com) to determine if that supplement would have a negative interaction with your current stack. Talk to your doctor about including a new supplement in your stack.
2. Introduce the new supplement at half of the regular dose.
3. After a week with the new supplement, slowly increase the dose to the recommended dose if you are not experiencing the effects you want.

Stacks are intended to be synergistic, which means taking two supplements together may provide more effects than the supplements by themselves. New supplements should be added carefully, since even low doses can be powerful if other supplements in your stack improve their effects.

## Can I modify the recommended doses?

If a supplement has an established advised dosage range, stay within that range. If a supplement has a recommended dose, and not a range, stay within 10% of that dose. Halving or doubling an advised dose could be ineffective or even dangerous.

The safest way to add dietary supplements to your life is one at a time. If you are considering purchasing several supplements, purchase only one and add the others after a week or two of supplementation. This will limit the risk of new supplements, and it will also make it easier to figure out what supplements are providing you with your newfound benefits.

### Can I take garlic and vitamin C in one dose, instead of three times a day?

Though frequent dosing of garlic will allow the body to spend more time with garlic's bioactive compounds, vitamin C and garlic do not need to be supplemented three times a day.

If taking these supplements once a day is effective and wards off sickness, then they do not need to be split into three doses. Keep in mind, supplementing three times a day is optimal and will provide the most benefits.

# Precautions & Troubleshooting

The safest way to add dietary supplements to your life is one at a time. If you are considering purchasing several supplements, purchase only one and add the others after a week or two of supplementation. This will limit the risk of new supplements, and it will also make it easier to figure out what supplements are providing you with your newfound benefits.