How to Take NAC for Cold & Flu Season (Dose, Timing & What Most People Miss) Transcript

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Hey everybody, well cold and flu season is here. Every year at this time, my office starts filling up with patients dealing with colds, size infections, bronchitis, the flu, and sometimes COVID.

And one of the supplements I rely on most this year is not vitamin C, it's not zinc, its n-acetylcysteine, better known as NAC or NAP. In this video, I'm going to cover what NEC is, what the research shows for your immune system, colds, influenza, COVID, how much to take, the best way to it, and why nebulized or inhaled NAC is one of my favorite tools for helping people with respiratory infections.

Now let's get into it. NEC is a modified form of the amino acid cysteine. Cysteines is the key building block your body uses to make glutathione, which is believed by a lot of people to be the most important antioxidant your produces.

Cysteine is usually the limiting ingredient in glutathione production. So when you take NAC, you're giving your body exactly what it needs to make glutothione.

Nac is not a fringe supplement. It's even been used as a medication for more than 60 years in the hospital system. And still today it's used an antidote for acetaminophen poisoning to protect the liver.

Its also of course used orally and as an inhaled treatment to thin mucus. NAC breaks apart the chemical bonds that hold thick, sticky mucus together so your body can clear it out of the sinuses and the lungs.

That combination of glutathione support, antioxidant, and anti-inflammatory activity and mucous clearing is exactly why it's so valuable in this winter.

Your immune cells depend on glutathione. Your T cells and your natural killer cells, which I call the special forces of your immune system, need adequate glutathon to do their job of finding and destroying viruses.

When glutothione runs low, these cells become sluggish. Researchers reviewed this connection in the Proceedings of the Nutrition Society. They described two randomized placebo control trials in patients with depleted glutophione In both trials, NAC significantly improved every immune function the researchers measured, including an almost complete restoration of natural killer cell activity.

That is a powerful effect from a simple, inexpensive supplement. Now let's talk about the study that convinced me to recommend NAC every winter. It was published in the European Respiratory Journal.

This was a randomized double-blind placebo-controlled trial run at 20 medical centers in Italy. It enrolled 262 people and 78% of them were 65 years or older.

The group, which is most vulnerable to the flu, half took 600 mg of NAC twice a day for 6 months through the winter and half a placebo. And here's what they found, the NEC group had significantly fewer influenza-like episodes.

When they did get sick, their symptoms were less severe and they spent less time confined to bed. Here's the most interesting part. Black testing showed that both groups were exposed to and infected with the flu virus at about the same rate.

That among those who were infected, Only 25% of those taking NAC actually developed symptoms, compared with 79% on placebo. Think about that. NEC did not stop people from catching the virus, but it helped their bodies handle it so well that most of them never got sick.

The researchers also found that cell-mediated immunity, the arm of the immune system that fights viruses,

progressively improved in the NAC group. For older adults especially, that's a meaningful advantage going into the flu season.

The trial tracked influenza-like illness as a whole, which captures the typical winter colds and viral infections we all deal with, and NEC reduced those episodes across the board.

We see the same protective pattern in people with chronic lung disease, whose flare-ups are frequently triggered by respiratory injections. The Pacchion trial, published in the Lancet Respiratory Medicine, followed more than 1,000 patients with COPD at 34 hospitals in China.

Those taking 600 mg of NEC twice daily for one year had a 22% lower rate of exacerbations than those of placebo. and also a meta-analysis in the European Respiratory Review, who had 13 studies with more than 4,000 patients and found that NAC also consistently reduced exacerbations of Croc bronchitis and COPD.

The authors concluded that a dose of at least 1,200 milligrams per day is the right target for prevention. So if you have a history of bronchi that flares every winter, NEC belongs in your plan.

Now COVID drives a lot of oxidative stress and inflammation in the lungs, and severe cases involve an overactive and inflammatory response, often called a cytokine storm.

Glutathione is central to keeping that response in check, which is why researchers turned to NAC early in this pandemic. A study in Greece published in the journal Infectious Diseases compared 82 hospitalized patients with COVID pneumonia.

Patients who received 600 mg of oral NAC twice daily for 14 days on top of standard care were significantly less likely to progress to severe respiratory failure requiring a ventilator and they had significantly lower death rates of both 14 and 28 days.

their oxygen levels improved, and their markers of inflammation and clotting also improved as well. A much larger study from Spain published in Science Progress analyzed the records of more than 19,000 hospitalized COVID patients.

Those who received high dose oral NAC, 600 milligrams three times a day, had about a 44% lower odds of dying. And that held up even after adjusting for steroid use and other factors.

For winter prevention, the dose with the strongest research behind it is 600 mg twice a day for a total of 1200 mg daily. That's the dosage used in both the Deflora flu study and the Pampion trial.

I have patients start in the fall and continue throughout the end of the flu season if they are typically susceptible to these illnesses. When you are actively sick with a cold, the flu, bronchitis, or a sinus infection, I increase the dose to 1200 mg 2-3 times a day until you recover.

For Croc, Bronchias, and COPD, handle as high as 4000 mg per day, although most patients use 2000-3000 mg a days to keep the mucus at bay. Now timing matters with NAC.

When you swallow NIC, the gut wall and the liver break down a large portion of it before it ever reaches your bloodstream. This is why I favor higher doses.

Again, 600mg twice a day or more is what I recommend for most patients spread throughout the day. To get the most into your system, take NAC on an empty stomach, about 30 minutes to an hour before meal or two hours after.

If it upsets your stomach take it with a small smack. And do not be alarmed with the smell. Nac is a sulfur compound, so a mild rotten egg odor when you open the bottle is completely normal.

Now let's talk about one of my favorite clinical tools, nebulized NAC. A nebulaizer turns a liquid into a fine mist that you breathe in through a mouthpiece or a mask.

This delivers N-A-C directly to the tissues of the nose, throat, and airways, right where the infection and thick mucus are. I use nemulized for upper respiratory tract infections, sinus congestion, post-nasal drip, chest congestion and bronchitis.

Patients tell me they can feel the mucus loosening and draining within just one or two treatments. Nebulized NAC is prescription and it comes as a 10% or 20% solution.

So work with a local doctor if you need this treatment. NEC has an excellent safety record after decades of use. The most common side effects are mild stomach upset or nausea, which usually resolves by taking it with little food.

Overall, NAC is one of the safest and most cost-effective supplements you can keep in your medicine cabinet. So here is the bottom line. NIC raises glutathione, strengthens your natural killer cells and antiviral immunity, thins and clears mucus and has solid human research behind it for the flu, winter respiratory flare-ups, and even COVID.

Usually, I recommend 600 mg twice a day on an empty stomach as your winter foundation. Increase the dose if you get sick and consider nebulized NAC for stubborn sinus and chest congestion.

This is the season to get ahead of infections, not chase them. For more videos on immune support, respiratory health, and the best evidence-based supplements, check out the other videos in my YouTube channel.

I'll see you in the next one.