

The Jury is still out as the science surrounding claims regarding common medications and remedies for COVID19.

Written by Dr. Janelle Smith, DO, Rushville Family Practice

MYTH: Infected persons should avoid taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen. Ibuprofen may cause increase risk of death.

TRUTH: The current COVID-19 treatment guidelines suggest Tylenol (Acetaminophen) as the medication of choice for treating fever in COVID-19. There is a theoretic risk to the use of ibuprofen and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications. One report from France suggested possible harm, but this has not been verified or replicated. As of March 20, 2020, world health organization did not recommend against the use of ibuprofen for treatment of fever in COVID-19, because there is no strong evidence of harm. If you have questions on proper use or dose of Tylenol or ibuprofen for you or your child, please contact your pharmacist or provider.

MYTH: Vitamin C will help fight off the COVID-19 virus.

TRUTH: While Vitamin C helps us maintain good immune function in general, and is rarely harmful, it has not been proven to help treat active COVID-19. Vitamin C is being used in a study of COVID patients who are in the intensive care unit, based on prior studies showing some help with acute respiratory distress syndrome, a severe type of lung injury. This use of vitamin C should only be used as a part of a clinical trial overseen by a physician. If you plan to try vitamin C supplements, please do not take more than suggested daily doses. More is not always better. As always, before starting any vitamin or supplement, contact your doctor or pharmacist. Many herbal remedies and supplements have interactions with medications and side effects.

MYTH: Elderberry can potentially stimulate what is commonly called a cytokine storm or cytokine release syndrome (CRS).

TRUTH: Elderberry is an antioxidant rich extract used in herbal supplements, including Sambucol. Elderberry is not likely to cause CRS to happen by itself, and there have been no links of Elderberry associated with CRS. In one very small study Elderberry extracts did increase human cytokine levels in the blood in *healthy* subjects. That means, there is a theoretic, but no proven risk to taking elderberry for COVID-19. Elderberry does have some studies showing it can be helpful with influenza, however COVID-19 does not behave the same way as the influenza virus, or other known corona viruses that cause the common cold. Bottom line: elderberry has unknown benefit, and theoretic (only) risk. It's best to skip this supplement until more is known.

What can you do to help keep your family safe and healthy?

Eat a well-balanced diet rich in vegetables, fruits, and lean meats. Exercise regularly as tolerated. Talk to your doctor before starting a new diet or exercise regimen. Be sure to get adequate sleep, an average of 8 hours per night. Avoid heavy alcohol, tobacco, or drug use. Practice good hand hygiene and adhere to social distancing guidelines.