

P.E.A.R.L.S. Practical Evidence About Real Life Situations



There is no evidence supporting the use of Chinese medicinal herbs for the common cold

Clinical Question	Should I encourage my patients to use Chinese medicinal herbs for the common cold?
Bottom Line	Chinese medicinal herbs may shorten the symptomatic phase in patients with the common cold. However, the lack of high quality clinical trials means that Chinese herbal preparations cannot be recommended for the common cold.
Context	The common cold is the most widespread acute respiratory tract illness affecting all groups worldwide. Asian people comprise 9% of the new Zealand population, and many may use or ask their GPs about using Chinese medicinal herbs.
Caveat	Although many Chinese herbal medicines are used to treat the common cold in China, well-designed randomised controlled trials are needed to assess their effectiveness and safety.
Reference	Wu T et al. Chinese medicinal herbs for the common cold Cochrane Reviews, 2007, Issue 1. This review contains 14 studies and 2440 participants.
Date (Author)	Feb 2007 (Brian R McAvoy)

NNT = numbers needed to treat to benefit one person

NNH = numbers needed to harm one person

Both NNT and NNH are only reported if the studies or pooling of studies is statistically significant

Disclaimer : The P.E.A.R.L.S. are for educational use only and are not meant to guide clinical activity nor are they a clinical guideline