

## THE EFFECT OF ECHINACEA PURPUREA TREATMENT ON PREVENTION OF UPPER RESPIRATORY TRACT INFECTIONS IN CHILDREN

**Objective:** To determine whether *Echinacea purpurea* given to children for the treatment of upper respiratory tract infections (URI) was effective in reducing the risk of subsequent URI. **Methods:** Data from a large randomized, double blind, placebo-controlled trial of *Echinacea* for the treatment of URI in children were used for this analysis. A total of 524 children ages 2 to 11 years were enrolled in the study and monitored for URIs over a four-month period during the fall and winter months of 2000-01 and 2001-02. At entry, study patients were randomized to receive *Echinacea* or placebo for treatment of acute URIs during the observation period. The occurrence of a second URI was ascertained, as well as the number of days between the end of the URI treated with study medicine and the start of the second URI. Survival and Cox regression analyses were used to determine if children who took *Echinacea* for their URIs were less likely to develop a subsequent URI than those who received placebo. **Results:** Among the 401 children with at least one URI treated with study medication, 69.2% of those receiving placebo developed a second URI vs. 55.8% of those who received *Echinacea*. Use of *Echinacea* was associated with a 28% decreased risk of subsequent URI ( $p = 0.01$ , 95% confidence interval 8% - 44% reduction in risk). The median time to subsequent URI was 38 days for children taking placebo versus 46 days for those receiving *Echinacea*. **Conclusion:** *Echinacea purpurea* may be effective in reducing the occurrence of subsequent URIs. However, this finding needs to be replicated in a URI prevention trial.