

## Supplement Sampler

**Plant: Pelargonium sidoides (South African geranium)**  
**Product: Umcka Coldcare (Umcka is a Zulu word for lung symptoms)**



### Best Indications

Promising herb for colds and bronchitis

### Mechanism of Action

Induces the interferon system, stimulates cytokines including tumor necrosis factor and natural killer cell activity.

### Best Study

**Common Cold:** Multi-center, prospective, double-blind, placebo-controlled randomized trial compared 30 drops of pelargonium TID on days 1-10 of a common cold to placebo in 103 people with a cold (52 herb, 51 placebo). Study was done in 8 outpatient clinics in Ukraine between 12/03 and 5/04. On day #5 of the cold, symptoms were reduced almost by 50% in the treatment arm (10.4 reduction in herb vs 5.6 in placebo on cold rating scale). Clinical resolution of cold symptoms after 10 days was significantly higher in the treatment group by 47% (78.8% vs 31.4%) The treatment group also lost one day less work than the placebo group. The herb was better tolerated than the placebo.

*Lizogub VG, Riley DS, Heger M. Efficacy of Pelargonium sidoides preparation in patients with the common cold: A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial. Explore 2007;3:573-584.*

Pelargonium has also shown benefit in treating acute bronchitis, which shares a similar etiology as the common cold.

*Matthys H, et al. Phytomedicine 2003; 10 (suppl 4):7-17.*

*Chuchalin AG, et al. Explore 2005; 1:437-445.*

*Matthys H, et al. Med Res Opinion 2007; 23:323-331.*

### Products

Unfortunately, the product used in this study was made in Germany and is not yet available in the U.S. It has been used in Germany since 1980 with annual sales in 2002 reaching \$55 million. A pelargonium product is available in the U.S. but as a homeopathic formulation that is not the same dosing as that used in the study mentioned above. I imagine that it will only be a matter of time before the formulations that were used in the research are available in the U.S., but currently the only formulation that we could find was through the company, Nature's Way, that is a 1X homeopathic formulation.

Nature's Way Umcka ColdCare ~ \$10/bottle

### Dosing

For Nature's Way Umcka ColdCare

Adults (12 yrs and older): 1 ml of the tincture 3-5 times a day



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## Pelargonium sidoides

The study above used a German-made extract of the geranium root at a dose of 30 drops TID for 10 days between meals.

Adults: 30 drops of the extract TID  
Children 6-10: 20 drops of the extract TID  
Children 2-6: 10 drops TID  
Children > 6 mths-2 yrs: 5 drops TID

As with many cold treatments, the earlier the medication can be started the better. You may want to advise patients to have this available at home prior to the cold season for more immediate dosing.

### **Precautions**

This herb appears to be very safe, and side effects mainly consist of an allergic reaction to the plant. Avoid in pregnancy and with breast-feeding.

Note: This study seems too good to be true, which warrants caution. Echinacea started out with similar supportive studies. Repeat after me, "more research is needed," but pelargonium appears promising and safe.

### **Disclaimer**

*The UW Integrative Medicine Program has no conflicts of interest with any commercial products.*

*Brought to you by your colleagues in the UW Department of Family Medicine Integrative Medicine Program.*

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