

Black elderberry extract may reduce flu symptoms

The Journal of International Medical Research

The black elderberry extract Sambucol has been shown to reduce symptoms and shorten duration of flu.

On average, flu patients given Sambucol recovered in 3.1 days compared to 7.1 days for those given placebo, showed the study. The remedy, manufactured from *Sambucus nigra* L. by Israel-based Razei Bar Industries, is currently available in the US, Canada, United Kingdom, Holland, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Israel, South Korea, Singapore and New Zealand.

Researchers at the University of Oslo School of Medicine in Norway enrolled 54 patients with type A flu and six with type B (29 females and 31 males, aged 18 to 54 years) in a double-blind, placebo-controlled study.

Study participants were randomly assigned to two groups, with one given Sambucol (1 tbsp) and the other a placebo, four times a day for five days. No significant side effects were reported.

A previous study published by The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine found that nearly 90 per cent of flu patients given Sambucol were completely free of symptoms within two to three days, as compared to at least six days with placebo.

Dr Madeleine Mumcuoglu, the virologist that developed the extract, said: "Flu viruses are covered by tiny protein spikes of hemagglutinin, which they use to attach to, and infect, healthy human cells. While working on my doctoral thesis we isolated key active substances within black elderberry that disarm hemagglutinin and thus stop the first step of viral invasion."

Black elderberry has not, however, been tested as a flu preventative, nor is it intended as a substitute for flu vaccine.

The supplement is available in formulas for both children and adults and has no known side effects or negative interactions. It contains AntiVirin, a compound that was isolated by Dr Mumcuoglu, which is also known for its high anthocyanin content.