

# The Medical Letter®

## On Drugs and Therapeutics

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### IN BRIEF

#### *Airborne*

Patients may be asking about *Airborne*, a dietary supplement that is being heavily promoted for prevention and treatment of colds. It contains 7 herbal extracts, 3 vitamins, 2 amino acids, selenium, zinc and many other ingredients. *Airborne Jr* is available for children. There are some concerns. First, there is no conclusive evidence that this product or any of its ingredients prevents colds or shortens their duration. Second, the adult tablet contains 1 g of vitamin C, and the directions for use advise taking 1 tablet at the first sign of a cold and repeating the dose every 3 hours as necessary. Vitamin C in doses higher than 1 g increases oxalate and urate excretion and may cause kidney stones (EN Taylor et al, *J Am Soc Nephrol* 2004; 15:3225). Third, the safety of this herbal extraction combination has not been established. And with herbs and dietary supplements in general, we only have the manufacturers' word on the label for what's in them.

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