

The Moss Nutrition Digest

Timely Tidbits to Support Your Practice

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Boosting Host Defense with Immunoglobulin-rich Colostrum

Around the world, seasonal flu shots—designed anew each year to target two or three influenza strains predicted to be prevalent during the following flu season—are widely recommended as a public health measure. Depending on the year, these vaccines are reported to be up to 60% effective against either contracting, or developing serious complications from the flu.

Based on the understanding that in many instances, influenza may enter the body via a gastrointestinal route, a 2007 Italian study examined the ability of immunoglobulin-rich bovine colostrum to protect against seasonal flu, compared to vaccination. The two-part study evaluated outcomes in groups of healthy subjects and high risk cardiovascular patients.

In Part 1, healthy adults were divided into four groups: vaccine only, colostrum only, vaccine + colostrum, and a control group receiving no intervention. Subjects in both colostrum groups (vaccinated and unvaccinated) took 400 mg of freeze-dried bovine colostrum—providing at least 200 mg of Immunoglobulin G, 15 mg of Immunoglobulin A and 5 mg of Immunoglobulin M, plus a wide range of naturally-occurring vitamins, minerals and amino acids—every morning at 8:00 AM for a period of eight weeks. All subjects were observed during the two months of colostrum treatment, and for an additional month after treatment had ceased.

Results found that both colostrum groups (those who were vaccinated, and those who were not) experienced a significant, 3 to 4 times reduction in both overall incidence of disease and number of days sick when compared both to controls, and to those who received a vaccine but did not take colostrum.

In Part Two of the study, a similar protocol (with the control group eliminated) was followed in high risk cardiovascular patients. Subjects were divided into three groups: vaccine only, colostrum only, and vaccine + colostrum. A total of 19 or 20 subjects in each group completed the study. Results found that in both colostrum groups, 3 of 20 patients contracted flu associated with an important bronchopulmonary complication, while in the vaccine only group, twice as many patients (n=6) experienced severe flu with complications and, sadly, one person died.

Based on the results of this study, the authors concluded that colostrum may help to improve host defense against flu viruses, and suggested that colostrum be considered a useful clinical adjunct, or alternative to the seasonal influenza vaccination.

REFERENCE

Cesarone MR, et al. Prevention of influenza episodes with colostrum compared with vaccination in healthy and high-risk cardiovascular subjects: the epidemiologic study in San Valentino. *Clin Appl Thromb Hemost*. 2007 Apr;13(2):130-6. Full text: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1076029606295957>