



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on October 19, 2010

Yogurt and Silver a Combo for Colds?

Is nature providing yet another answer to the common cold? According to an October 16 [Telegraph.co.uk](#) article, scientists have discovered that tiny nanoparticles of silver can be attached to harmless bacteria, turning them into “silver bullets that can destroy viruses, and provide a cure for the common cold.”

Using silver could be an option considering the concern that antibiotics become ineffective against organisms that develop resistance to the drugs. But how does it work?



The nanoparticles are attached to the surface of bacterium. The bacteria used in this study, *Lactobacillus fermentum*, is often found in yogurts and probiotic drinks used to aid in digestion. The findings of the study were revealed at a meeting of the Society for Applied Microbiology last week by Professor Willy Verstraete, who said the bacteria could also be incorporated into nasal spray, hand washes and water filters to help prevent the spread of viruses.

Nanoparticles of silver are already being used in antimicrobial fabrics for sportswear. They help reduce the growth of odor-causing bacteria, and it has been found that they can be fixed on other surface such as cutting boards, which can also harbor viruses.

The technology is being further developed to tackle viruses other than the common cold.

Dr. Michael Dempsey, Manchester Metropolitan University biologist who has studied the effects of silver on microorganisms, said, "A nanoparticle contains around 15,000 atoms of silver according to some recent research from China on how they work. This means a high concentration of silver atoms come into contact with the micro-organism, punch a hole in its wall and destroy it."

There has been concern that the size of the particles could allow passage into other parts of the body, causing harm since silver, in large enough amounts, is already known to cause lung, kidney, or liver damage. According to the *Telegraph* article, Professor Verstraete claims that by attaching the silver to the outside of the *Lactobacillus fermentum* bacteria, the silver is fixed onto a larger object that cannot pass into other parts of the body or roam around the body.

Use of nanoparticles of silver is not new, however. A liquid suspension of submicroscopic silver known as colloidal silver has long been used as an anti-bacterial, anti-virus, and anti-parasitic remedy.

According to Wikipedia, silver is the least toxic of the elements to humans, and Hippocrates, the “father of medicine,” wrote that silver had beneficial healing properties. [Silver](#) has been used to treat external wounds because of its bacteria-killing properties.

The FDA is not convinced that silver is safe. An agency [report](#) on colloidal silver concludes, “Salts for internal or external use are not generally recognized as safe and effective,” but the agency has not banned its production.



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Silver remains a popular remedy, though, and perhaps this new study will give Americans relief from the annoyance of the winter cold, as well as disarm this FDA [intrusion](#) into our health care decisions.



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