



Press Release

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Edinburgh researchers to trial salt water solution to treat Covid-19

A simple salt water solution may help to reduce the early symptoms and progression of Covid-19, research suggests.

This new study builds on a trial, published in 2019, designed to identify a low cost and easily accessible intervention against the common cold.

It found that participants who gargled and cleared their nose with a salt water solution reported fewer coughs and less congestion. Gargling also cut the length of their cold by almost two days.

Researchers at the University of Edinburgh say the sea salt may work by boosting cells' antiviral defence that kicks in when they are affected by a cold.

The team has re-examined the data and discovered the same benefits were also experienced by those participants who were infected with one of the four common coronaviruses known to cause colds.

Researchers now aim to investigate whether the same solution will benefit those who are experiencing symptoms of the new strain of coronavirus, which causes Covid-19.

[The study](#) is recruiting adults in Scotland with Covid-19 symptoms or a confirmed case of Covid-19. Those who join the trial will be asked to follow government advice on hygiene and self-isolation, with one group asked to gargle and clear their nose with salt water.

The study is funded by BREATHE – the Health Data Research Hub for Respiratory Health.

The original pilot study – known as the Edinburgh and Lothians Viral Intervention Study, or ELVIS – recruited healthy adults within two days of them contracting an upper respiratory tract infection – commonly known as a cold.

The participants were divided into two groups with one group asked to gargle and rinse their nasal passages with a salt solution as they felt necessary. The other group dealt with the cold the way they normally would do.

All participants kept a diary of their symptoms for up to two weeks. Self-collected swabs were also tested to measure the amount of cold virus in their nose.

Those who did nasal irrigation and gargling with the salty solution had a shorter cold, were less likely to pass it on to their family, had faster viral clearance and were less likely to use medicines from a pharmacy.

Professor Aziz Sheikh, Director of the University's Usher Institute, said: "We are now moving to trial our salt water intervention in those with suspected or confirmed Covid-19, and hope it will prove to be a useful measure to reduce the impact and spread of the infection. It only requires salt, water and some understanding of procedure, so should, if found to be effective, be easy – and inexpensive – to implement widely."



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To find out more about the study and to take part, please go to <https://www.ed.ac.uk/usher/elvis-covid-19>.

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