

Flu Preparation, Prevention and Treatment

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Building Up the Immune System for Prevention

~Vitamin D3

Why? Research is showing vitamin D plays a large role in our immune system and is a hormone produced in the body by virtually every cell and not really a vitamin. Studies are showing that vitamin D deficiencies are linked with immune system dysfunction, resulting in ailments from colds and flus to cancer.

During the winter, those of us living in the northern hemisphere become vitamin D deficient because the sun needs to be at least at a 45 degree angle in the sky and a large amount of exposed skin to absorb it. Most of us lack these two key elements and need to supplement.

How? Shockingly, the best way is to go to a tanning bed 3 times a week for 10-20 minutes. However, this must be with a UVB bed, not a UVA bed which is generally the type of beds offered as the UVB rays will not give you a tan. The 2nd best way is to supplement by taking vitamin D3. Paul Bergner recommends: “healthy children under the age of 2 years should take 1,000 IU per day—over the age of 2, 2,000 IU per day. Well adults and adolescents should take 5,000 IU per day. Two months later have a 25-hydroxy-vitamin D blood test, either through ZRT or your doctor.”

~Take adaptogens such as Astragalus and Ashwagandha

Why? These herbs originate in China and have been used for centuries to build and support the immune system, regulate fluid metabolism and strengthen weak lungs.

Adaptogens are herbs that support our immune system and gently restore it to its proper function which will result in better overall health.

How? Dried Astragalus root can be added to soups, broths, or when you are cooking rice or other grains. It can be drunk as an infusion or taken as a tincture.

Ashwagandha is generally taken by adding 1-3 teaspoons to a cup of warm milk with a tablespoon of molasses added and drunk in the evening before bedtime. Start with 1 teaspoon and work your way up as you get accustomed to the taste.

Please note that while these herbs are safe to be taken over long periods of time and in fact work better when doing so, you should refrain from taking them if you do get sick because they can feed the illness and force it deeper into the body. At the first sign of illness, stop taking any adaptogens and resume taking them a week after all signs of illness are gone.

Other adaptogens include: Holy Basil (Tulsi), Peppermint, Lemon Balm, Hyssop, Maitake, Oatstraw

~Nourishing Bone Broth and Miso Soup

Why? These foods are filled with valuable vitamins and minerals that are better than taking a multi vitamin! It's a great way to get vitamins in a picky eater and also slip a few nourishing herbs such as Burdock root, Astragalus root or Dandelion root into a daily diet. They are also gentle and nourishing and great to use during an illness.

How? Create a bone broth from the bones of chickens or beef or any other animal you have available that has marrow in it. Fill a stock pot half full with bones, cover with water and add 1 tablespoon of apple cider vinegar. Bring the water to a boil and simmer for about an hour. Chop and add a couple of carrots, an onion, a couple stalks of celery, 2-3 cloves of garlic, 2-3 roots each of Burdock, Dandelion and Astragalus, and any herbs you'd like such as Chickweed, Rosemary, Thyme, Oregano and Sage. Mushrooms such as Reishi, Maitake, Turkey Tail and Shitake should be added. Also, if you have it, kale is a great addition.

~Common Sense Tips to Increase Immune System Function

- *Avoid processed and refined foods: sugar, caffeine, preservatives, etc.
- *Eat whole foods, fresh and organic as much as possible
- *Wash your hands often, especially when exposed to those who are sick. Try to avoid the commercial hand sanitizers and use plain soap and water if at all possible. The 'antibacterial', 'antimicrobial' type soaps are only creating super bugs who become resistant to these attempts of destroying them.
- *Exercise daily, preferably in the fresh air. Take a brisk walk, play frisbee or hula hoop. It doesn't matter, just get outside and get your heart pumping!
- *Rest. Most people become run down by trying to do too much in a day. Learn to say no, cut back and simplify your life. Your health depends on it!
- *Limit stress. High stress levels wear out the immune system.

Supporting Your Body at the First Sign of Illness

~Herbal Help

- *Take Elderberry elixir, syrup or glycerite.
- *Add fresh, raw Ginger to your diet. Nibble on a slice of it or add to an herbal tea
- *Garlic. Eat a few cloves raw by mixing it in with your food right before eating. Also, pickled Garlic is a great way to eat it raw that tastes delicious! Simply peel enough Garlic cloves to fill a jar (any size) and cover with apple cider vinegar OR tamari. After 6 weeks, strain off 1/2 the liquid and fill with raw honey. Shake and let sit another 6 weeks. It's ready to eat and the liquid you've poured off (from both times) can be used in cooking as well. The garlic vinegar is great to take a tablespoon at a time at the first sign of an illness.

*Herbal Tea Blend. A mix of St. John's Wort, Bergamot, Sage, Peppermint and Lemon Balm is a great blend to make into a tea. It tastes great and can help lessen the duration and severity of the flu or cold.

~Common Sense Help

*Rest. At the first sign of an illness, slow down. Slow down, read a book. Get more sleep than you generally need. Your body can heal much quicker when you are at rest because it can get to work instead of just trying to maintain the status quo.

*Absolutely NO sugar, except a bit of honey to flavor a tea if needed.

*Nourishing, easy to digest foods. Your body spends a lot of energy digesting food. Give yourself the much needed energy to put towards fighting off the illness by eating easy to digest foods such as bone broths, miso soup and congee.

To make congee: 1 part rice (white rice is more easily digested), 5 parts water and 5 parts chicken stock. Cook until rice is soft.

Another great nourishing food is kicharee. (see list on last page for recipe and more info)

What To Do When You've Got the Flu

~Rest

If you're not there already, go to bed! Make yourself a couple of healing herbal tea and grab a good book.

~Nourishing food (see above)

~Avoid sugar, processed food, caffeine.

These substances will only weaken the immune system further.

~If you have a fever, don't force yourself to eat.

Keep drinking plenty of fluids to stay hydrated. Make your own "electrolyte" drink:

1/2 lemon squeezed

1 tablespoon honey

1/16 teaspoon sea salt

hot water

Place ingredients in a tea cup, stir to dissolve and drink. Herbal tinctures such as Echinacea, Elderberry, St. John's Wort, etc. can be added. Ginger can also be infused into the hot water before adding.

~Get fresh air daily, several times if possible.

While you should limit your time outdoors during cold weather, try to get some fresh air a few minutes each day.

~Support your body, don't suppress it.

The symptoms you are feeling is your body's way of cleaning house. Our bodies are built to handle most illnesses on their own. While feeling miserable is no fun, it is important to not interfere as much as possible.

~Avoid fever reducers, pain relievers and other 'suppressant' type over the counter drugs.

They can do more harm than good. Drug companies are now stating that children under 4 should not be given any cough or cold remedies. Pediatricians are starting to see that doing so does more harm than good to children and their ability to fight off their illnesses.

Herbs are supportive of the body and they work to help fight off the virus instead of suppressing the body's ability to do so.

Fevers

Letting a child (or adult) run a fever is actually a good thing. It is burning off the germs. According to Paul Bergner (Acute Symptoms CD set), a fever kills off different pathogens at different levels:

- 99 degrees – Influenza can no longer replicate
- 104 degrees – Polio virus is reduced
- 106 degrees – Pneumonia dies (make sure to keep hydrated, very important!)
- 106 degrees – Spirochetes die (Lyme disease)

Fevers not only kill of virus and bacteria, they increase blood circulation which helps to deliver a better immune response.

There are 4 stages to a fever.

Stage 1: your immune system is getting ready to kick some viral butt! We start to feel cold and reach for another blanket, sweater or get into bed to get warm. You can assist in this step by taking warming herbs. These herbs will increase the core temperature which will then radiate to the surface. Herbs to assist in this step include:

- Ginger
- Garlic
- Bergamot
- Thyme

Stage 2: This is when your body temperature reaches its set point. You won't be shivering any more and will feel warm and dry to touch. Your pulse may be rapid and strong. Drowsiness is also likely at this point. Achiness, caused by muscle tissue being broken down as amino acids are being taken from the muscles, is common. During this stage, keep the room well ventilated and stick to lukewarm drinks instead of hot drinks. Tepid baths can

also be supportive at this phase. During stage 2, relaxing diaphoretics should be taken such as:

- Boneset, specifically for aches and pains (caution, very bitter)
- Elderflower
- Catnip (caution: bitter)
- Lemon Balm

Stage 3: This is the stage that lowers the body's temperature back to normal. The body has done what it needs to do to kill off the virus and/or bacteria and is now cooling off. Sweating profusely and kicking off the covers is common. There will be a fluctuation of temperatures in this stage which will cause you to be too hot and then too cold on and on. This stage is the highest at risk for dehydration. It is especially important that you drink plenty of hydrating fluids at this stage. (See electrolyte recipe on page 3).

Stage 4: This involves repairing and healing. Paul Bergner recommends bed resting for 2 days for every 3 days of fever. Eat easily digestible protein, shower, change the sheets on the bed and make sure you are well nourished, clean, rested, warm and comfortable. (grab another book while you're at it!). Returning to your regular routine too quickly can cause you to have a relapse and possibly leave you susceptible to a more damaging illness such as a secondary bacterial infection (pneumonia).

Notes about fevers:

-a normal person can have an extremely high fever before it will cause injury. Human cells start dying at 110 degrees

-highest risk from fevers are dehydration and electrolyte imbalance (see recipe on page 3)

-special considerations need to be made for infants, elderly and anyone with a compromised immune system (AIDS, cancer, etc)

-in these patients, a temperature of 101 degrees is the equivalent of a 'normal' person having a 104 degrees temperature

Sore Throats

~Herbs for sore throats include Sage, Thyme, Garlic and Turmeric. Mixing ground Turmeric and honey into a paste and eating it can do wonders to soothe a sore throat

~Hot lemonade is soothing to a sore throat and has a great dose of vitamin C (see recipe page 3 under electrolytes). At the beginning of a fever, adding some Ginger can help to get the body working and is also soothing to the throat and tummy

~Salt water gargle can help kill germs in the throat and mouth

~Slippery Elm and Marshmallow root are soothing. Make a gruel by mixing either with warm water and eating

Coughs

There are different types of coughs: acute and chronic which can be broken down into productive and unproductive coughs. In the case of the flu, coughs are acute and are again, the body's way of fighting off an illness. Coughs clear the lungs of pathogens and excessive phlegm. Most of the time, you do not want to suppress the cough because by doing so, you are not allowing the body to clear itself of the illness.

Productive coughs are coughs that are accompanied by phlegm. It is potentially harmful to suppress this type of cough with medication or herbs. This could result in causing a secondary bacterial infection such as pneumonia. Instead, we want to use an expectorant herb to help promote the flow of mucus, aiding your body in removing the phlegm and pathogens from your body.

If phlegm is excessive, you should use stimulating expectorant herbs such as:

- Elecampane
- Horehound
- Wild Cherry

If the phlegm feels 'stuck' in the lungs a bit but still moving, a soothing expectorant herb may be needed to help thin out the mucus to help it move:

- Plantain
- Marshmallow
- Slippery Elm

Unproductive coughs can be broken down to two types as well. They can be completely 'stuck' as above but moving no phlegm. In this case, use the demulcent herbs:

- Plantain
- Marshmallow
- Slippery Elm

The lungs can feel dry and painful, burning the throat and keeping you awake when you really need to sleep. Soothing expectorant herbs can help soothe the throat and bring relief. Antitussive herbs are relaxing herbs that will calm the cough and allow you to get the rest needed:

- Mullein
- Thyme
- Red Clover
- Wild Cherry
- Bergamot

Things to Avoid When Sick

- Dairy products (they can cause the mucus to build up)
- Processed foods
- Sugar, caffeine

-Orange juice (can cause mucus to build up). Try lemon or lime juice instead. It's best to drink them warm and make them with fresh squeezed lemons and limes and sweetened with honey instead of sugar. Oranges can also be immunosuppressive.

-Alcohol

-Heavy foods

Warning signs of serious illness in a young child with the flu:

-Fast or troubled breathing

-Bluish skin color

-Fever and cough improve then return and get worse

-Lack of thirst

-Failure to wake up easily and interact

-Irritability so the child does not want to be held

If anyone shows any of these signs/conditions, go to a doctor:

-Anyone with a compromised immune system such as an infant, elderly person, or AIDS/HIV positive, cancer person

A quickly rising fever that causes alarm

-A fever that lasts for more than 3 days

-A steadily worsening condition

-You are worried and feel you should see a doctor

Suggested Reading:

~Adaptogens: Herbs for Strength, Stamina and Stress Relief by David Winston and Steven Maimes

~Dr. Duke's Essential Herbs: 13 Vital Herbs You Need by James A. Duke, Ph.D.

~The Book of Ginseng and Other Chinese Herbs for Vitality by Stephen Fulder Ph.D.

~Personal Renewal: Your Guide to Vitality, Allure, and a Joyful Life Using Healing Herbs, Diet, Movement, and Visualizations by Letha Hadady

~Herbal Antivirals: Natural Remedies for Emerging & Resistant Viral Infections by Stephen Harrod Buhner

Internet Sources:

My post on regional herbs for the season:

<http://lunaherbco.com/2009/10/october-blog-party-bio-regional-herbs-for-the-cold-and-flu-season/>

Herbal Roots zine on Fire Cider:

Free eBook: <http://www.herbalrootszine.com/fire-cider-ebook.pdf>

Fire Cider collection (contains 5 issues of Herbal Roots zine): [http://](http://www.herbalrootszine.com/back-issues/herbal-roots-zine-fire-cider-collection/)

www.herbalrootszine.com/back-issues/herbal-roots-zine-fire-cider-collection/

Portions of Rosalee's ebook "Herbal Remedies for Colds and Flu" can be found here:

<http://www.methowvalleyherbs.com/2012/12/creating-herbal-medicine-chest-for-cold.html>

<http://methowvalleyherbs.blogspot.com/2010/11/preventing-colds-and-flu.html>

<http://methowvalleyherbs.blogspot.com/2011/10/herbal-remedies-for-first-sign-of-cold.html>

<http://www.rosalee.info/cold-and-flu-coughs>

<http://www.rosalee.info/cold-and-flu-at-the-1st-sign>

Darcey Blue French on How to Handle Winter Illness Successfully at Home, page 7:

<http://www.thewisconsinherbalist.com/resources/Wisconsin%20Herbalist%20October%202011.pdf>

Antivirals for treating H5N1/Bird flu:

<http://the-health-gazette.com/496/natural-antivirals/>

For further information on vitamin D, see:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpQ4Hmfi3gs&feature=channel_page

<http://drgominak.com/vitamin-d>

To make miso soup, watch this video:

<http://www.videojug.com/film/how-to-make-miso-soup>

For more information on Kicharee and recipes go to:

<http://planetherbs.com/diet/kichari-the-food-of-the-gods.html>