

Dr. Bethune's The Flu and You Health Tips

10 Naturopathic tips for staying healthy during flu season...

1. Go for the gut: The largest part of our immune system is in our gut (digestive system, most specifically small intestines). One of the best ways to support this part of our immune systems is by supplementing with probiotics like *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifidobacterium*. These organisms naturally occur in our colons and can help reduce cold and flu intensity.

2. Food for thought: Poor nutritional status is associated with poor defense against viruses and bacteria. This makes sense as nutritional depletion is linked to immune system depletion. Any of the following foods may be added to your cooking to give your health a tasty boost.

- **Follow the rainbow:** Everyday, eat at least one fruit or vegetable from each color family (Green, Orange/yellow, and Red/purple) to ensure that you are getting an array of vitamins and minerals.

- **Oh those onions:** Onions have been used for centuries as both food and medicine. Onions are full of both vitamins and minerals and relieve inflammation. Onions help to treat coughs by acting as an expectorant (gets the phlegm out) and as an anti-spasmodic-relaxing the lungs in bronchitis and asthma. It also improves allergies and hayfever by reducing the release of histamine.

- **Gotta get garlic:** Garlic is anti-viral and anti-bacterial, assisting your body in fighting off germs. After chopping or crushing garlic, let it sit for a few minutes before cooking so that its natural compounds will release the beneficial properties.

- **Medicinal mushrooms:** maitake, shiitake, and reishi mushrooms are anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti-cancer, and deep immune tonics. They induce interferon production, disrupting viral replication and inhibiting bacterial infection.

- **Spice it up:** Ginger and cayenne peppers help to increase circulation while warming the body. Cayenne is a bronchodilator, reducing the symptoms of asthma and bronchitis. Ginger is also anti-bacterial and an anti-oxidant.

3. Cut it back, Jack!: Reduce sugar, dairy, and alcohol

- 1 teaspoon of sugar can moderately suppress your immune system for up to 5 hours!

- Sugar also puts stress on your adrenal glands-your defense against stress.

- If you must indulge in sweets, limit yourself to one serving a day.

- Dairy foods (including: milk, yogurt, cheese, ice cream, etc.) create mucous in most individuals.

- As we heal from a cold or flu, we want to easily release any phlegm or mucous. Eating dairy can make this more difficult.

4. Strong like bull: Take precautions to keep your oral and nasal mucosa strong.

- The "mucosa" is the moist skin on the inside of your nose and mouth.

- When the inside of your nose becomes dry and cracked, germs can enter more easily through those cracks.

- This is made worse by allergens, irritants/chemicals, and heat or air conditioning.

- Keep the inside of your nose moist by staying hydrated, avoiding irritants, standing in a hot shower, and using a neti pot or other nasal irrigation.

- Clean your home with **eco-friendly products** to reduce exposure to harsh inhalants.

5. Bountiful berries: Berries (blueberries, elderberries, raspberries, blackberries, etc.) contain anthocyanins which act as free radical scavengers, also known as anti-oxidants. They help to protect our cells from damage that leads to disease of all kinds.

- **Elderberry:** *Sambucus nigra* shortens the duration and intensity of flu infections. These berries also reduce inflammation or what is called inflammatory cytokines. This is one of the goals in treating **H1N1**. Elderberry has been shown to have direct anti-viral activity on H1N1. Elixirs and syrups which contain elderberries are fantastic anti-viral treatments. These can be used as preventatives as well.

6. Tea time:

- Choose tea instead of coffee as your hot morning beverage.

- *Althea officinalis* (marshmallow) and *Ulmus fulva* (slippery elm) are very soothing to sore throats by moistening the mucus membranes. Throat coat tea is a good one and may be enjoyed warm or cold.

- Green tea has antioxidant, anti-cancer, antimicrobial, anti-tumor, and immune stimulating properties.

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Dr. Stephanie Bethune, Naturopathic Physician

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10 Naturopathic tips for staying healthy during flu season... (continued)

7. Herbs:

- **Echinacea:** anti-viral and anti-bacterial. Echinacea should not be taken long term and should be avoided by those who have auto-immune conditions. Echinacea has also been used historically to offset the side effects of immunization.
- **Eupatorium (boneset):** Influenza is the best known illness treated with Eupatorium. It became well known as a treatment during the epidemic of the early 1900's. It relieves the deep muscle and bone ache and the fever associated with flu. It also has great anti-bacterial activity.
- **Goldenseal (Hydrastis):** is anti-viral, anti-bacterial, and anti-catarrrhal (reduces mucous production). This herb works best if it touches the infected tissue directly. Therefore, it can be used as a liquid or powder form as indicated.
- **Osha (Ligusticum):** is a potent anti-viral herb especially indicated for infections of the upper respiratory tract. It is also used when residual symptoms of a cough, cold or flu continue to linger by breaking up thick mucous.

8. Simple supplements: Each of the following nutrients has been shown to protect against the flu virus:


- **Vitamin C, 3 grams/day:** Vitamin C is a well-known anti-oxidant.
- **Selenium, 200 mcg/day:** Selenium deficiency is associated with worsening of cold and flu symptoms.
- **Vitamin D, 2000IU/day:** Studies suggest that maintaining proper Vitamin D levels may protect against **H1N1** virus.
- **NAC (N acetyl cysteine) 1200mg/day:** Provides the body with the amino acid cysteine. This is the raw material our bodies use to make glutathione. Glutathione is the main antioxidant used within cells. Studies have shown that patients who take 1200 mg/day for 6 months have milder symptoms and fewer episodes of flu.

9. Holistic Homeopathy: There is a remedy called oscillococinum which is a great general treatment to reduce the duration and severity of flu symptoms.

- 5-6 pills under tongue, twice a day for 3 days, 20 minutes away from food or drink
- This remedy is also a great tool to avoid catching the flu while on airplane trips. This remedy can be used after exposure to the flu virus. However, it should be taken for 1 week.
- But the best way is to have a remedy chosen according to your unique symptoms. An experienced practitioner will look at your temperature, cravings, thirst, mood, aversions, and so on.

Note: if you are prone to pneumonia or bronchitis, prolonged or frequent colds, ask your naturopathic doctor about the possible use of other preventive or treatment remedies.

10. Wonderful water: These treatments work as an excellent immune system stimulant. The body increases the circulation to warm and dry the socks or compress. This relieves congestion. This is an excellent treatment for children, even infants. Good for chest colds, ear aches, migraines, nasal congestion, and many other conditions.

- **"Magic" wet socks:** Just before bed warm the feet in a bath or basin of warm-hot water. Soak a pair of cotton socks in ice-cold water. Wring them out. Place the cold wet socks on the feet. Place a pair of dry wool socks over them. Leave socks on overnight.
- For **chest congestion:** Soak a hand towel or a thin cotton T-shirt in ice water and wring out well. Or, wet, wring out and put in the freezer for a few minutes. Place the towel over the chest or put on the wet, cold T-shirt. Put a wool blanket on top of the towel or if using the T-shirt, put a wool sweater or thick sweatshirt on so that all the cold cloth is covered. Leave on for 45 minutes. Repeat 1-2 times/day.
- For **sore throat:** Soak a wash cloth in ice water and wring out well. You can also put the wet, wrung out cloth in the freezer for a few minutes. Wrap the cold cloth around your throat and cover with either a wool scarf or a thick towel so that air will not get thru. Leave on for 45 minutes. Repeat 1-2 times/day. 

**Each of the tips above should be used as a part of a healthy lifestyle like hand-washing, covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze, and getting adequate rest. Whether you choose to be vaccinated or not, it is important to *decide* to take care of yourself.

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