

cold war

don't let your guard down when colds and flu creep up on you

BY LIZ LIPSKI, R.D., C.N.N.

As a mother of four college students and a nutritional consultant with a private practice in Asheville, NC, I keep an arsenal of flu and cold remedies on hand at all times. When seasonal ailments level those around me, I go on the defensive.

Aside from getting a flu shot, whose effectiveness is debatable, what can we do to protect ourselves? We know that eating healthfully, getting adequate sleep and washing our hands are important. But I know that winter time (aka cold and flu season) is also the time to really rev up my immune system to stop the bug from beating me down.

ON ACTIVE DUTY

The value of exercise as a preventive measure against illness was duly demonstrated by Joseph Pilates. When residing in England during World War I, Pilates was jailed because he was a German national. During his incarceration, at the time of the 1918 influenza epidemic, he taught fellow inmates his unique exercise method. None became ill.

We know that Joe was ahead of his time. Two decades of research has backed up his conviction that exercise strengthens the immune system. A recent study in *The European Journal of Applied Physiology and Medicine* reports that healthy adults who exercised 25 to 30 minutes three to four days a week had fewer symptoms of flu and respiratory distress than those who didn't.

FORTIFY FOR IMMUNITY

Exercise and eating wisely go hand-in-hand. Although there hasn't been any research on the specific role of diet in the prevention of colds and flu, we know from other studies that

eating a variety of healthful foods is just good common sense. Plant foods such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes and whole grains contain protective antioxidants, phytonutrients and minerals. Protein from chicken, turkey, fish and/or legume sources is essential for the production of antibodies and protective enzymes. It is documented, however, that certain substances, including sugar and alcohol, suppress the immune system, so you should limit your intake whenever possible.

ENLIST VITAMINS

Getting proper nourishment is only half the battle for upping your immunity since you can't get all your nutri-

As with any major battle, when it comes to fighting colds, the best offense is a strong defense.



ents from food. If taken on a daily basis, a multiple vitamin with selenium, vitamin E, NAC (N-acetyl cysteine) or glutathione, resveratrol and quercetin may be as effective as vaccines or antiviral treatments. Even if you're not in the supplement habit, once you get the flu it's not too late to start. You can fight the buggers more effectively if you start supplementing at the onset of symptoms.

And don't forget good ol' vitamin C. A 2006 study in *The European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* demonstrated that taking 500 mg. of C daily reduced the incidence of colds, although not their severity once contracted.

If your nose just started running, Russell Jaffe, M.D., Ph.D., an immune defense scholar at the Health Studies Collegium, suggests an aggressive approach: Start taking 1,500 mg. of the ascorbate form of C every 15 minutes until you get diarrhea (then back off). I've been doing this for a long time and have found that I can divert a cold. But beware: The diarrhea part is no fun.

On the more pleasant side, zinc lozenges are more than just candy-flavored throat soothers. Not only are they effective for prevention of colds, more than 10 studies show that they also shorten the duration and decrease the intensity of colds and flu if taken within 24 hours of the onset of symptoms. Suck on one every two hours; cut back if you experience nausea.

HERBAL AMMO

Along with the more traditional pre-attack plans, solid scientific support shows that many herbs, foods and

immune protection formulas

When buying a formula to boost your immunity, these brands contain the recommended combinations of ingredients mentioned in this story.

Source Naturals: Wellness Formula, **Nature's Way:** Ultimate Immunity, **Gaia Herbs:** Echinacea/Red Root Supreme, **Herb Pharm:** Immune Defense Tonic, **Vital Nutrients:** Immune Support, **Symbiotics:** Colostrum Plus, **Garlic Capsules or Tablets** (deodorized is best for your breath!)



nutrients found at your local health food store can stave off illness by increasing immunity. When buying an immune-protection formula, search out brands containing these ingredients: garlic, echinacea, oil of oregano, red root, goldenseal, lomatium, selenium, propolis, horehound, olive leaf, thuja, colostrum, wild indigo, mullein leaf, astragalus, grape seed extract. Take one tablet or several droppersful of the liquid tincture a day during cold and flu season for prevention. If others near you are sick, increase your dosage to the maximum listed on the product label. (See "Immune Protection Formulas" above.)

ARGH! THEY GOT ME!

You've done all the right things, but your throat is scratchy and your nose is runny. This is hardly the time to throw up your hands and surrender. Research shows that most remedies—herbal, homeopathic and over-the-counter—work best if taken at the

onset of symptoms. So act now.

It may be old-school, but drinking hot liquids such as tea and clear soup discourages colds by making mucous less viscous. Chicken soup has been proved to protect us from infection. Diluted fruit juices and flat ginger ale settle the stomach. There's no clinical evidence, but we find relief with a simple tea of lemon and honey.

Aside from conventional therapies, I've found a few alternative solutions that work faithfully for my family and clients year after year. Studies show that elderberry extract, which is available at health food stores, shortens flu's length and severity by as much as four days. Adults should take one tablespoon in two ounces of water, juice or tea, three or four times daily. It's tasty too.

Another remedy that helps to prevent and shorten a cold's or flu's duration is yin chiao, an ancient Chinese herb found in health food stores in tablet form. Taken consistently for the first day or two when you feel symptoms coming on can often stop it in its tracks. Since products vary by manufacturer, take the maximum dose on the label.

If store-bought remedies aren't your bag, consider making your own flu caps. About 30 years ago I had the privilege of taking a course on herbal remedies from herbalist Joy Gardner, author of *The New Healing Yourself: Natural Remedies for Adults and Children* (Crossing PR, 1989). She

showed us how to make flu caps, and ever since then, my homemade caps have resolved illness in everyone who started taking them within 24 hours of getting zapped.

Prepare them ahead of time so they're at the ready. Here's how: At a health food store, buy a package of empty 00 size capsules and small amounts of these bulk herbs: cinnamon, cayenne, goldenseal and slippery elm powders. At home, take one teaspoon of each, mix in a small bowl and put



into the empty capsules, tamping each down with a chopstick. This makes about 30 capsules. Take one or two every two to three hours as needed.

SECRET WEAPON: TLC

No matter what protocol you choose, when you or a family member becomes ill, remember that this is a time for nurturing. A long time ago, in the midst of sniffles and sneezes, a teacher of mine asked, "What upset you three days ago?" Thinking back, I did recall a stress-

ful event. Since then I've found that being distressed is often followed three days later by a cold. According to Candice B. Pert, Ph.D., author of *Molecules of Emotion: The Science Behind Mind-Body Medicine* (Scribner, 1997), when we are feeling happy and content, cold viruses have no place to attach to cells. Since most of us aren't content all the time, what is the cure? Self-nurturing.

So whip a big pot of soup or treat yourself to ginger tea while curled up on the sofa. Watch movies that make you laugh or cry. Take hot baths laced with sage oil. Spend a couple of days just loving yourself. Honestly, it's what your body was begging for. ☉

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