

health talk



Top 5 Ways to Fight Cold & Flu Season

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You may have felt it already: the runny nose, the sore throat, that embarrassing cough. Or perhaps you've taken the day off work because you've spiked a fever, feel achy all over, and are so tired you don't want to get out of bed. Cold and flu season is in full swing. Regardless of whether or not you decide to get the flu vaccine, there are several basic changes you can make to reduce your risk of catching the cold & flu season.

First, let's have a quick lesson on what is happening in your body when you get sick. The common cold & flu symptoms listed above are not the enemy; they are actually your own immune system's best efforts to protect your body from the foreign invader. When you have some type of infection, it is the job of your immune system to recognize and destroy these invaders with clever attack mechanisms like:

- Raising your body temperature to create an environment so hot that viruses and bacteria cannot replicate. This temperature has also been shown to increase production of your body's own chemicals that help your immune system to work better (**Symptom: Fever**)
- Increasing the number of immune cells that circulate around the body to search for the virus so it can then it and prevent the virus from spreading to the rest of your body. (**Symptom: Inflammation that leads to generalized muscle pain & achiness**)
- Creating mucus to trap the virus from spreading to the rest of your body and stimulating a powerful force to drive the virus out via the nose or mouth. (**Symptoms: Nasal congestion, runny nose, phlegm, coughing, sneezing**)
- Decreasing energy to other body systems so that more energy is conserved for the immune system to effectively eliminate the virus. (**Symptoms: Feeling fatigued so that you can sleep and recover quicker!**)

Your body has an amazing ability to fight off an infection on its own, but often due to stress, poor dietary choices and lack of sleep, it is unable to do so. Providing your body with the right nutritional and lifestyle choices will help to ensure that your im-

mune system has the right tools to do just that. Here are my top 5 naturopathic tips that can reduce your risk of infection and help your immune system to recover as quickly as possible:

- 1. Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid):** Vitamin C is an antioxidant shown to improve recovery rates from viral infections. Try eating rich sources which include: acerola berry, red sweet peppers, kale leaves, broccoli, persimmons, strawberries, papayas and citrus fruit.
- 2. Zinc:** Many people consume a zinc-deficient diet, but optimal zinc levels are crucial for immune health. Zinc deficiency makes you more susceptible to infections. Try pumpkin seeds, brazil nuts, whole wheat, rye, oats, almonds, walnuts.
- 3. Water:** When you are dehydrated, you risk getting tiny cracks in the insides of your mouth, nose and respiratory system. This makes it easier for viruses and bacteria to enter your body and cause illness. Choose ample amounts of pure, filtered water daily to keep nasal and mouth linings intact. In the case of infection, fluids are especially important as a fever can cause dehydration. To help meet your daily intake, non-caffeinated herbal teas can be helpful.
- 4. AVOID REFINED SUGAR:** Research shows that refined sugar depresses the immune system. This is vital for this time of year, with treats from the holiday season in our midst. Limit your refined sugar intake to prevent infection and AVOID refined sugar altogether when sick to promote a speedy recovery. Refined sugars include not only the obvious candies and desserts, but also any white, refined and enriched bread & pasta products. Choose 100% whole grain products instead.
- 5. Rest!!** Research has repeatedly shown that a lack of sleep leads to depressed immunity, which explains why you are more susceptible to viral infections when you do not get a good night's sleep. Deep breathing techniques can help initiate the relaxation response and encourage sleep.

If you get frequent, severe or prolonged cold and flu symptoms, suffer from a lack of sleep or chronic stress, or have a pre-existing health condition, it is best to seek individualized naturopathic care that may include nutritional supplementation and herbal medicine to help support your individual needs. All the best to you & your family this cold & flu season...naturally!

