

Weekly Wellness Tip (December 9, 2013)

Preparing for Cold and Flu Season



On average, between 5 and 20 percent of the U.S. population will get the flu during the annual cold and flu season — which typically runs from November to April. Each year, between 3,000 and 49,000 people in the United States die from flu-related issues. Cold and flu viruses are often passed between people and along surfaces in the workplace. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), people are most contagious the first two or three days after catching a cold and for about five days after being infected with the flu — even before symptoms develop.

Is It a Cold or the Flu?



Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Fever	rare	usual, high (100-102°F); lasts 3-4 days
Headache	rare	prominent
General aches, pains	slight	usual; often severe
Fatigue, weakness	quite mild	can last up to 2-3 weeks
Extreme exhaustion	never	early and prominent
Stuffy nose	common	sometimes
Sneezing	usual	sometimes
Sore throat	common	sometimes
Chest discomfort, cough	mild to moderate; hacking cough	common; can become severe
Complications	sinus congestion or earache	bronchitis, pneumonia; can be life-threatening

Cold and Flu Fighting Foods and Remedies*

Lemon



Keep your internal acid/alkaline chemistry balanced by squeezing a half lemon into a cup of hot water to break up congestion, stimulate digestion, and create an alkaline or healing pH chemistry in the body.

Leafy greens



Eat dark leafy green vegetables like kale, swiss chard, and spinach provides vitamins B12, folic acid, potassium, vitamins A, C & K which supports a healthy immune system.

Fermented foods



Increase “good” bacteria such as acidophilus and bifidus which can be found yogurt or kefir.

Cayenne pepper



Cayenne pepper has a high vitamin C content making it a natural choice for a cold, as well as vitamin A, B, calcium and potassium. Cayenne also increases the circulation in the body. You may take in capsule form taking 2 – 40,000 heat units (950mg), or liquid 4 drops of the 200,000 heat units. Place a few drops in water and gargle with it every 15-30 minutes to make a sore throat disappear.

Honey



Honey acts as a natural antibiotic with antiseptic properties. There are vitamins such as B-complexes, C, D, E, minerals enzymes and propolis. The propolis in honey boosts the immune system, disables viruses and fights infections. Furthermore, pediatric studies have shown that honey is more effective than cough syrup because it coats the throat better. Locally grown honey is best for seasonal allergies, asthma and respiratory conditions because you are treating with the irritants that are common to your area. Take a tablespoon 4 times per day, taken straight or in tea.

Garlic



Garlic has allicin as an active ingredient giving it antiviral and antibacterial properties. Garlic cleans your liver (which cleans your blood) since your blood cycles through your liver every three minutes. So thereby stimulating the white blood cells and in turn boosting the immune system. Onions also contain allicin and offer similar benefits.

Wild Salmon



Wild Salmon is high in vitamin D, which the immune system needs to kill harmful bacteria and viruses.

Ginger



The volatile oils in ginger warm the body, helping the body to sweat, break a fever and eliminate toxins. Ginger also stimulates mucous release. Ginger is also a metabolic enhancer and the warming also helps with nausea, is a great digestive aid, lung and chest decongesting, and a body cleansing herb. Add fresh ginger to your food or in tea, or eat alone. Ginger tea (especially combined with honey) helps too soothe the throat.

Spices



Spices such as turmeric, cloves and cinnamon are packed with antioxidants, which help improve the function of the immune system. Try consuming a teaspoon of spices every day to help ward off the flu. Try mixing some cinnamon into your morning oatmeal or sprinkling extra nutmeg over a bowl of applesauce. If you're already feeling ill, traditional Indian medicine (called Ayurveda) recommends using spices to help sweat out a fever: Sip a tea from a mixture of boiling water, 1/2 teaspoon (2.5 mL) each of cinnamon and coriander and 1/4 teaspoon (1 mL) of powdered ginger to help bring your temperature down

Berries



All berries have high concentrations of antioxidants to help fight off flu viruses but blueberries pack the most punch: When tested against other foods, blueberries were found to have more antioxidants than 40 other fruits and vegetables. Eat at least one serving (1/2 cup or 125 mL) of raw berries every day to help you stay healthy during the flu season. If you can't find fresh berries during the colder months, stock up on the frozen variety. Eating frozen berries isn't as good as eating them fresh, but it's better than eating them cooked. Run frozen berries under cold water to thaw and eat them in salads, smoothies or yogurt parfaits.

Chicken soup



Grandma was right to load you up with her own special brew: Researchers are finding that soup works to ward off viruses. One theory is that hot soup raises the temperature in the nose and throat, which creates an unwelcoming environment for viruses that thrive in cool and dry places. Homemade chicken soup also has protein groups that have been shown to have anti-viral activity. Make up a big batch of our Old-Fashioned Chicken Noodle Soup and keep some in the freezer in case of emergencies.

Salt Water



Salt water in homemade saline nasal sprays, nasal washes, and gargles has long been used effectively to soothe sore throats, and keep respiratory passages moist, decongested and free of invading pathogens. If you do get a sore throat, gargle with half a teaspoon of salt mixed with 1 cup of warm water, four times per day. For nasal washing, use a neti pot or bulb syringe with a quarter teaspoon salt in 1 cup of warm water. Tip head to one side over sink or basin and gently introduce solution to higher nostril. Allow solution to drain from the other nostril. Repeat procedure by then tipping head to opposite side. Note: Although many use warm tap water in their neti pots, distilled, sterile, or previously boiled water is recommended for purity/safety. Be sure to clean and dry the neti pot after each use to prevent the introduction of harmful bacteria into the nasal passages/sinuses.

Steam

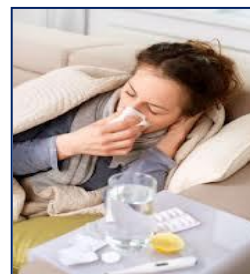


Steam can help to relieve stuffiness and congestion. Boil a pot of water on the stove and then slowly breathe in the steam. Be careful as steam can cause burns. If the steam makes your nasal passages burn, pull your head back slightly and breathe in more slowly. The truth is many of the old standard home remedies, when used regularly and properly, can be your body's best – and least expensive – defense against colds and the flu, also helping to minimize their impact if they do take hold.

Preventive Care

Here are some tips to help you avoid catching a cold or the flu:

- **Get a flu shot** as soon as it becomes available in your area.
- **Wash your hands** for at least 15-20 seconds **with soap** several times a day or sanitize with an alcohol-gel hand sanitizer, especially following contact with potentially contaminated surfaces.
- **Avoid touching your face**, eyes or rubbing your nose.
- **Clean shared items** such as phones, keyboards, handles and door knobs with alcohol or sanitizer wipes.
- **Avoid close contact** with anyone who has a cold or the flu.
- Sneeze and **cough into a tissue**, throw the tissue away and then wash your hands. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow instead of your hand.
- **Don't eat group food**. Skip the chips and dip. Eating from group plates increases your likelihood of getting sick.
- **Get enough sleep**. When your body is tired, it doesn't fight infection as hard. Make sure you're getting at least 8hrs of sleep every night.
- **Don't drink alcohol**. Alcohol weakens your immune system and can make you more susceptible to illness.
- **Hydrate**. When your body is fighting an illness your immune system is working overtime. Make sure it has everything it needs to function at its best, including plenty of water.
- **Eat well & take your vitamins**. They'll boost your immune system.
- **If you do get sick, stay home to avoid spreading your illness**.



When a cold or flu is caused by a virus, antibiotics won't cure it. Antibiotics only treat bacterial infections. Overusing antibiotics can result in antibiotic resistance, making common infections difficult to treat. It's important to ask your doctor whether you really need an antibiotic and decide if it's the best choice for you.

Someone to Talk To



The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a great resource for all University employees. They offer free and confidential counseling and life advice 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Whether you need help finding affordable day care, or you need someone to help you cope with stress, the EAP can help. **713-500-3327 or 1-800-346-3549.**

**Tip take from:*

<http://www.beliefnet.com/Health/Healthy-Living/7-Flu-Fighting-Foods.aspx?b=1>

<http://www.besthealthmag.ca/get-healthy/cold-and-flu/5-flu-fighting-foods?slide=1>

<http://www.aarp.org/health/healthy-living/info-09-2013/flu-fighting-foods-photos.html#slide5>



Work-Life Wellness Program

ENCOURAGING A CULTURE OF HEALTHY CHOICES