

ARE YOU READY FOR THE FLU SEASON?

By Gisela Norman

Seasonal changes affect the body's environment. When the hot days of summer give way to cooler temperatures, and the first cold, windy and rainy days roll in, we become more susceptible to colds, flu, aches and pains – especially if we've forgotten to take a jacket or jumper to work with us.

What to have in your medicine cabinet?

The first step is prevention by keeping our immune system strong throughout the winter months, and keeping germs at bay. For that purpose, ***Echinacea*** may be taken throughout the winter as a tonic for the immune system. It helps to dispatch white blood cells to fight infection. A good rule of thumb is to take the herbs for three weeks on, one week off.

Learn to recognize the indications that your own immune system is not working as well. Certain foods may suddenly become unappealing like coffee or sweets, which suppress the immune system. If food in general is unappealing, eat lighter, and eat less. You may suddenly require more sleep than usual, or become tired around midday. Your skin may break out in spots, or your eyes might appear glassy. Once you are aware, you can begin to respond.

At the first signs of a cold, make sure you are dosed up with plenty of high doses of ***vitamin C*** and drink hot water infused with slices of fresh ginger. In the Orient, ***ginger*** is considered the best home remedy for colds. Drink a cup of ginger tea several times a day with honey throughout the winter. Ginger contains a dozen antiviral compounds, and it tastes good. ***Marjoram tea*** is suitable for colds or flu with fever. As marjoram is a cool and pungent herb it induces perspiration and relieves mucous discharge.

Garlic has anti-bacterial properties that help the immune system to fight infection and it is excellent at boosting the immune system, so consume as much as possible (it's ok to be antisocial when you are ill!).

A teaspoon of grated ***horseradish*** in boiling water makes a bracing drink for winter chills. These herbs, as well as garlic, may be added to a winter diet to increase natural resistance.

Consider adding essential oils for an extra measure of defense; try one or a combination of ***geranium, lavender, cinnamon*** or ***tea tree***. A handkerchief or tissue imbued with a drop of oil can provide an instant inhalation if you are in the company of obvious germ-carriers.

Eat lots of ***fresh fruit*** for natural Vitamin A, B and C such as lemon, oranges and grapefruit. Onions, radishes and honey are all useful in treating colds and flu.

Taking ***zinc lozenges*** within the first 24 hours of the onset of a cold have been shown to shorten its duration by about 50%. These lozenges should not be taken for more than a few days at a time as zinc depletes your body's store of copper. If you experience dry mouth or stomach irritation, reduce the frequency of use.

Extensive studies have shown that ***elderberry extract*** (Sambucol), is an effective treatment for the influenza virus, which can cut the duration of the flu in half. The health-

giving properties of black elderberry have been documented as far back as the 5th century and favoured by Hippocrates - the father of modern medicine. The berries were extolled as an all-round remedy due to their tonic and blood purifying properties.

Add 30-60 ml (2-4 tbsp) of **Epsom Salts** to hot water and take a hot bath. After the bath go straight to bed.

Of course the best treatment for any impending cold is **chicken broth**.

Why Traditional Chinese Medicine?

It is the oldest, continually practiced health care system in the world. It is a documented medical system spanning over 2,500 years. In a long history of fighting against the cold and flu, Chinese medicine has developed excellent acupuncture treatment and herbal remedies. Acupuncture boosts the immune system and builds blood, which I have found to be successful as a preventative measure.

The most common remedy is **Yin Qiao Jie Du Pian**. It is widely used in China, especially for the first symptoms such as sore throat, cough, or runny nose. The formula contains herbs that are suggested by some research to be antiviral. Researchers have found that Yin Qiao can induce perspiration, reduce fever, relieve pain and cough, resist bacteria and viruses, and subdue inflammation.

For the effective prevention of viral and bacterial infection, I often recommend the use of **Yu Ping Feng Wan** in people who have been easily infected by the cold or flu viruses or by the bacteria in the respiratory tract in the past. It can be used on a daily basis for a couple of months. The formula is traditionally used in China for children and the elderly who are susceptible to the common cold and flu.

I prescribe a Chinese flu remedy, which has shown to be particularly effective for the treatment of the more severe types of influenza. When there are symptoms of high fever, cough or painful chest, headaches, thirst, swollen and sore throat – all of which can be debilitating. One of the ingredients was used effectively to treat people affected by the SARS outbreak that surfaced in China in 2003.

PLEASE CHECK WITH YOUR GP OR PHARMACIST IF YOU ARE UNSURE ABOUT
TAKING ANY OF THE REMEDIES

Gisela Norman, is an acupuncturist with 22 years experience, a member of British Acupuncture Council and a registered nurse. All Chinese herbs Gisela prescribes are 100% natural herbal remedies. They are time-tested and safe, with no pharmaceuticals, no preservatives and no artificial colours. The formulas adhere to the Good Manufacturing Practice guidelines.

Gisela holds a clinic at Kingswood Natural Health Centre and is happy to have an initial discussion over the phone on: 07968 855 001 or call the Centre to make an appointment on 0117 914 5590.