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## **Basic Immune Support, Flu Prevention and Treatment**

### **Flu Basics**

#### **Basics about flu viruses:**

A condition like the flu is triggered in the body by multiple kinds of viruses: Influenza A like H1N1 (1 species, 10 serotypes), Influenza B (1 species, 1 serotype) and Influenza C (1 species, 1 serotype). Each of these can further differentiate into different strains. The viral particles enter the human body via the mouth or respiratory tract and then attach to receptors on our respiratory tract cells in order to replicate. The virus uses the cell's machinery to make thousands more, these offspring then burst out of the original cell, killing it, and in turn can infect healthy cells nearby. This is considered a viral infection. Viral particles can spread to any area of the body and the following response of the body to the viral particles result in the common symptoms of the flu. Examples include: spread to the throat causing a sore throat, the blood causing muscle aches and pains, the stomach causing nausea and cramping, and the lower intestinal tract causing diarrhea.

The viral particles can be spread from person to person in many ways:

- They can be coughed or sneezed into the air
- You may kiss or drink after someone who is infected
- Viral particles can be left behind on cups, doorknobs, telephones and eating utensils

Antibiotics are completely ineffective in dealing with any viral infestation. Antibiotics are more appropriately named, antibacterial. Bacteria are a completely different ballgame!

Does everyone exposed to a viral particle develop symptoms of the flu? No. A person with a very good immune system can mount a response very quickly and either prevent the virus from entering the cells or slow the replication of the virus. This happens in several ways.

#### **The Immune System and Viruses**

Your body and immune system are equipped to deal with a viral infection in various ways, once the virus gets past the physical barriers such as skin or body mucus.

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- Fever – one of the early responses of your immune system is to create chemicals called interferons that serve many functions. One is to increase body temperature. By elevating the body's temperature even just a couple of degrees above normal (98.6° F, 37° C), viral particles are inhibited. Interferons also do several other things in the body, such as warn surrounding cells that a virus is present, stimulate the body to make an enzyme that can inhibit viral replication and destroy infected cells.
- The innate immune system - cells and other mechanisms that defend in a non-specific manner by recognizing viruses in a generic way - call other cells to the infected area to help fight the infection. They also help the body clear away dead cells and help activate the adaptive part of the immune system.
- The adaptive immune system - “remembers” the invader and helps the body deal with it during future exposures by making antibodies. IgM is an antibody that is very good at eliminating viruses and it is produced for a couple of weeks. IgG, another antibody does not have a time limit and it is around indefinitely.
- Cell-mediated immunity - involves T cells which are responsible for recognizing suspicious cells and in many cases killing those or the infected host cell.

### **Basic Immune Support**

One of the most important things to keep in mind during any conversation about the flu and the immune system is that there are two approaches. First, we need to keep the immune system strong and vibrant and second is what we do with the immune system once an infection has occurred. We do not necessarily think about this consciously, but people are exposed to any number of viral particles every day. In fact, our immune system is clearing unwanted viral particles right now! It is quietly going on about its business and clearing both the viral particles and the cells that have died as a result of invasion. But once there is great enough exposure, or if we are exposed to some variant of viral particle our immune system has never seen before, our cells may become overwhelmed. In this case, we have to boost or help our immune system clear up the overload.

### **Flu Prevention / Immune Support**

There are a number of strategies to prevent a flu infection. Some involve things you do, and some involve a variety of things you can take.

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### **What you can do**

- Basic hygiene: wash your hands.
- Limit exposure (mask, stay away from high risk environments like crowded places)
- Maintain a strong immune system by eating a whole foods diet, minimizing sugar intake, maintaining proper nutrition levels with supplementation, getting enough sleep.
- Eat warming foods like soup to help adjust to the cooler weather.

### **What you can take**

#### **The Basics:**

- Multiple vitamins: ensures that basic nutritional needs are being maintained and that basic immune function has the cofactors it needs.
- Probiotics: the gastrointestinal tract plays a large role in immune function and in turn, proper intestinal flora are essential for a healthy intestinal tract.
- Essential fatty acids (fish oil): help keep the cell membranes fluid, which contributes to effective immune cell communication. 1,000 mg daily.

#### **Immune Boosting/Balancing:**

- Extra Vitamin C (500 mg with bioflavonoids)
- Extra Vitamin A (5,000 IU mixed carotenoids)
- Extra Vitamin D (2,000 IU cholecalciferol – D3), during cold and flu season: helps directly in maintaining immune function.
- Zinc (9-24 mg): a key player of proper immune function..
- Mushroom blends: much research has been and continues to be done in regard to the effect mushrooms have on the human immune system. A blend containing a combination of the following is a primary line of prevention: Agaricus Blazei Murrill, Coriolus versicolor, Shiitake Mushrooms, Maitake, Reishi, Cordyceps, and Phellinus Linteus.
- Biovegetarian: a natural antibiotic at high doses and an immune support at low doses. Adults: 1 tab per day. Kids – in general, about 1/3 tab a day but check with your ND before using with your little ones.
- Kindermune: used throughout the winter and school months. Very nice immune support for kids up to 12.

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- Homeopathic Flu: stimulates your body's ability to prevent infection and shortens duration, if infected. Dosing is 1/5 of a vial, one time a month Sep-Jan.

## Treatment

Once you have the flu....what can you do?

### Herbs

- Ginger root: helps with nausea, is warming, mild pain reliever. Works very well as a warm tea sweeten with a little stevia or honey, add lemon.
- Chamomile: Can help relax the body and supports immune function.
- Astragalus: Direct immune modulator, can help boost function and reduce spread of viral particles.
- Elderberry: Direct immune modulator, can help boost function and reduce spread of viral particles.
- Avena sativa: Anti-spasm, pain relieving, relaxing.
- Ashwagandha: Especially good to help restore vitality post flu-cold episode. Can help reduce recovery times and boosts immune function.
- Echinacea: Can help slow the spread of viral particles, blood cleaner, immune support.

### Homeopathic remedies

- **Influenzinum**: preventative homeopathic treatment, not so effective once the flu has set in.

When choosing one of the following remedies, you may see typical symptoms of the flu: chills, fever, nausea, muscle aches and pains, diarrhea, loss of appetite and headache. Uncommon symptoms and characteristics in the patient will help you decide which remedy to choose. These can be dosed as often as needed.

- **Aconite (Acon 30C)**: tremendously thirsty, may have a sudden high fever or chills. Fear of death, for no apparent reason, can be present. Symptoms came on very suddenly, especially after exposure to a dry, cold wind, infection or from an emotional shock or fright. There is a high fever, sore throat and feeling of great worry and fear. The individual is very *restless* and they feel better in the fresh air.

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- **Arsenicum (Ars 30C):** Extreme physical weakness but a feeling of restlessness in the mind. Vomiting and diarrhea at the same time, very weak afterwards. Thirsty for very cold water but only sipping a little at a time. Could feel very cold but be hot to the touch.
- **Baptisia (30C):** flu that comes on suddenly, a feeling of being bruised and sore all over, the body and limbs feel as if they are scattered and all in bits. There is profuse sweating with a high fever and an intense thirst. The face is dull red in color and people who need this remedy look dazed and sluggish as if they may fall asleep at any time.
- **Belladonna (Bell 30C):** Symptoms come on rapidly, often a very high fever, person can be red and hot or pale. Pupils may be dilated, person is better when upright or slightly inclined, often better in a warm room. The right side of the body may be more affected than the left, they are worse lying down and worse at night.
- **Bryonia (Bry 30C):** If the person feels better when completely still, or much worse with any motion/movement. Will be very thirsty. Mouth and other mucous membrane could be dry. Throbbing headache, wants to be left alone.
- **Eupatorium (Eup-per 30C):** flu is accompanied by severe bone pain, aching in every bone, sneezing and coryza.
- **Gelsemium (Gels 30C):** weakness accompanied by a sense of heaviness and trembling. There is a great chill, so intense the person may need help standing. The eyelids may feel heavy. The symptoms usually come on slowly. Weakness, heaviness and trembling are the key here.
- **Nux vomica (Nux-v. 30C):** Chills predominate, and a cold draft will really be intolerable for someone needing this remedy. They will want to be covered up and will be worse when uncovered. There is usually a lot of irritability and sensitivity to noise or light.
- **Veratrum album (Verat 30C):** Painful, explosive diarrhea, very cold hands and feet, not as hot to the touch as Ars, feels very cold, like an ice cube. The persistence of the diarrhea is a clue to Verat.

### Supplements and other...

These can really be dosed quite high for a few days.

- Vitamin C (500 mg every couple of hours)
- Mushrooms (double or triple daily dose)
- Elderberry (can dose every couple of hours)
- Astragalus (can dose every couple of hours)
- Vitamin A (can increase to 10,000 IU twice a day for a couple of days)
- Biovegetarian (natural antibiotic) – 2 tablets every 3 hours adults. For kids, check with me.

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- Keep a tincture of Astragalus and Elderberry (1:1) on hand at all times.
- **Super Duper Secret Flu Treatment:**
  - Adults: 1 oz water + 10 drops Colloidal Silver + 5 drops Illumodine (it must be this specific product) + 1 tsp apple cider vinegar + 1 tsp raw honey. Every 4 hours.
  - Kids: 1 oz water + 5 drops Colloidal Silver + 3 drops Illumodine (it must be this specific product) + 1/2 tsp apple cider vinegar + 1/2 tsp raw honey. Every 4 hours.

## **Food**

The general idea when someone is sick is to ease up on the food, allow the body to use its resources for healing instead of digesting and detoxifying a bunch of food. Many old time docs recommend almost a fasting state when ill. This is a modified version

- Soup – any homemade, clear broth soup will work. Organic meats, a few veggies, rice. No creamy soups, no pasta.
- Ginger ale – Zevia brand, sip at room temperature.
- Mineral water – any sparkling water without additives, sip at room temperature.
- Crackers – dry, saltines ok, try rice crackers.
- Rice – white or brown rice, steamed. Can use a little almond milk, cinnamon.
- No heavy meals, no fried foods, no ice-cream, chips, candy, etc. Leave off caffeine and go with herbal teas and water – hot or at room temperature.
- Oxymel: an old Greek remedy that is AMAZING:
  - 1 bulb garlic + 4 cups water + ¼ cup raw honey + ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
  - Peel and finely chop garlic cloves. Do not use the pre-peeled and minced garlic sold in stores as this has already begun oxidizing. Add to the water in a large pot with a cover, heat to boiling and boil until garlic is very soft, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to cool at least 1 hour. Add the honey and vinegar, mix well. Store in the refrigerator up to 5 days. Gently reheat on the stove before drinking. ½ - 1 cup per day. Optional: can add 1 tablespoon finely minced fresh ginger root. Do not use in respiratory illnesses where heat predominates.
- Immune Soup: (from: [http://www.learningherbs.com/herbal\\_immune\\_system.html](http://www.learningherbs.com/herbal_immune_system.html))
  - Ingredients
    - 8 cups (237 ml) water
    - 1 tablespoon (15 ml) olive oil
    - 1 onion, diced

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- 1 bulb garlic (at least 10 cloves), minced
  - One 1½ inch (3½ cm) piece of fresh gingerroot grated
  - 1½ cups salted vegetable soup stock (or chicken broth)
  - 5 pieces sliced dried Astragalus Root
  - 2 cups fresh, sliced shiitake mushrooms
  - 1 large reishi mushroom
  - Cayenne powder, if desired
- Directions:
- Bring water to boil in large pot. Heat olive oil, sauté garlic, onions, and ginger until soft and aromatic. Add contents of skillet to water. Add broth, shiitake, Astragalus, and reishi. Simmer covered for two hours. Remove from heat, allow to sit for two more hours. Remove Astragalus and reishi mushrooms. Reheat. Add salt and pepper to taste, and cayenne powder if desired. (just enough to bring out a light sweat).

### **Other strategies**

**Skin Brushing** – This stimulates healing and detoxification, strengthens the immune system, moves the lymph. This is done with a very soft-bristled brush, most health food stores carry them, on dry skin just before bathing. Always brush towards the heart.

**Epsom Salt Bathing** – This is great for the aches and pains of the flu. Use ½ - 1 cup of Epsom salts per very warm (hot) bath tub of water. You can add various essential oils to the water such as peppermint, eucalyptus or lavender – 15 drops or so. Soak for 15 -20 minutes, adding warm water if needed to keep the bath hot. It is often written in the literature that a quick rinse with cool water is stimulating to the immune system.

**Dealing with the Fever** – First off, you want a fever and if you do not run a fever when you are sick then you are really sick! This is such an important part of ridding the body of viral particles that the old docs would “sweat it out” of their patients. It is normal for people to want to use a fever reducer at the first sign of a rising temperature - but reconsider this impulse. Allow the temperature to rise to 101° F (38.3° C) or even 102° F (38.9° C) before reaching for the fever reducer. Stay hydrated, keep a cool rag nearby for the forehead, stay still and rest. The fever will break. This is a delicate situation in children as a rapidly rising temperature can trigger a febrile seizure. There is little evidence that any long-term

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damage happens from febrile seizures, so perhaps get the input of your local Naturopathic Doctor before using a fever reducer.

### **Convalescing**

Perhaps one of the most neglected areas of medicine in the last 70 years is the idea of convalescence. We often feel better before our body is ready to resume normal activities. Allow 3-5 days of time to rest and rejuvenate after you feel better!

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