

Wellness

REVIEW

Managing Cold and Flu Symptoms

Despite your best efforts at preventing infection through diet, exercise and supplementation, at some stage this winter you may succumb to a cold or flu. This can occur particularly if stress or life events get in the way of maintaining the healthy habits that help keep your immune system strong. The good news is that should you find yourself 'under the weather', there are measures you can take to get you back on your feet.

Going Viral

Both the common cold and influenza (flu) are caused by viruses, most commonly the rhinovirus. What many people may not realise is that antibiotics only target bacteria and are not able to kill the viruses responsible for colds and flu. Fortunately there are herbs and nutrients that can help manage these viral infections and keep your immune defences strong.

Herbal Heroes

A number of traditional herbs have been clinically shown to improve immune function and reduce symptoms of the common cold and flu. For example, use of the Ayurvedic herb andrographis can reduce both the severity and duration of cold and flu symptoms. In addition, picorrhiza has been used traditionally in both Ayurvedic and Chinese medicine to help maintain a healthy immune system, and it is now understood that this herb has both anti-inflammatory and immune-stimulating actions. Elderberry is a mainstay of traditional Western herbalism for its anti-catarrhal and fever-reducing activity, helping to relieve acute cold symptoms as well as recurrent coughs. If you are unwell with a respiratory virus, your Practitioner can recommend a herbal formula that contains these immune-supporting heroes.

Fungi Force Field

Medicinal mushrooms have a long history of use in Asian cultures and are now known to have potent antiviral activity. In particular, the immune-boosting potential of reishi, shiitake, cordyceps and coriolus mushrooms have been extensively studied. Not only can they help reduce the length and severity of an acute cold, but they can help prevent future recurrences. Speak to your Practitioner about a concentrated extract of these mushrooms to reduce the symptoms and severity of your cold.

Getting Rid of the 'Gunk'

Mucus and phlegm are signs that your immune system is hard at work, but the resulting congestion can lead to blocked sinuses and breathing difficulty. The decongestant, anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial essential oils of eucalyptus, thyme, lavender and peppermint may help to reduce the nasal and sinus congestion that accompanies upper respiratory tract infections.

Mucus congestion can also cause irritating or chesty coughs. Liquorice is recognised in Western herbal medicine for its soothing, anti-inflammatory and expectorant properties. An extract of liquorice root can reduce irritation of the respiratory mucous membranes, helping to soothe dry coughs and relieve mild bronchitis. The Ayurvedic herb adhatoda is a helpful bronchodilator also with expectorant properties. By encouraging the clearing of congestion-causing phlegm, your airway becomes more open and that irritating wheeze reduces. If you are coughing or your sinuses are blocked, speak with your Practitioner about an appropriate formula containing these mucus-busting herbs and essential oils.

The Lost Art of Convalescence

In this modern world you may feel obliged to 'soldier on' despite coughing, sneezing and operating at less than optimal capacity. Taking the time to rest and recuperate reduces the risk of spreading the infection to your colleagues and helps you to recover sooner. The lifestyle prescription when you are unwell is sleep, sleep and more sleep! Resist the temptation to check your work emails. Instead, focus your efforts on restoring your energy levels with warm, nourishing foods such as soups; drink plenty of fluids to replace those lost as you blow your nose repeatedly; and avoid mucus-promoting, inflammatory foods such as dairy and processed foods.



Fight Back and Stay Well

If a cold or flu finds its way to you this winter and is stopping you from performing at your best, don't despair – your Practitioner can recommend a herbal or nutritional formula with antiviral, anti-inflammatory, decongestant and immune-boosting power to support your convalescence and help get you back in the game again.

Talk to your Practitioner about managing cold and flu symptoms today.