

# COLD & FLU

## FACTS:

- Cold or Flu? There's no surefire way to tell the early symptoms apart. Usually, colds are milder (runny or stuffy nose dominant) and come on slower. The flu or **Influenza** virus is usually more severe and comes on suddenly. **Fever, body aches, chills, chest discomfort/cough, headache, sore throat, stuffy nose and total exhaustion or lack of energy are common symptoms. In children – nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are often a problem.** Colds can last from between 2-5 days or more. Flu's can last from 3-14 days.
- Colds and Flu are both caused by **viruses** and **not bacteria**. When bodies are highly stressed and one's immune system is weakened, colds and flu's are more likely to be triggered.
- Colds and all strains of flu are **highly contagious** and the airborne contaminated droplets are easily spread by coughing, sneezing or nasal secretions.
- Anyone can get a cold or the flu, but rates of infection are **highest among children**. Young children, people aged 65 and older, pregnant women and people with a weakened immune system or certain health conditions – such as heart, lung or kidney disease, are especially at **higher risk of getting much sicker from the influenza virus (high fever, pneumonia; existing conditions can get worse; diarrhea and seizures in children).** Each year over **23,600 people die from the flu in the United States.**
- Influenza viruses are always changing. Each year the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), tries to create a vaccine that combines all of the viruses that are most likely to cause flu that year (**annual flu vaccination**). The vaccine is often **different for children, adults and seniors**. It is highly recommended that **all people 6 months of age and older** get an annual flu shot (especially people at higher risk of severe influenza, people working closely with the public like health care professionals and parents with children younger than 6 months).
- **Most influenza occurs between the months of October and May (so get your flu shot before October).**
- **It takes up to 2 weeks for protection to develop after the shot and the protection lasts for about a year.**

## TAKING ACTION:

Feeling sick is always unpleasant, but a bad cold or the flu can really set back the best of us. Experts all agree that **the earlier the intervention, the better the results** especially in shortening the duration of the illness.

**Avoid future exposure to sick people or people that appear to be coming down with something.** Wash your hands repeatedly, carry a disposable mask around with you and when someone in the family is sick, switch to disposable products in your bathroom, swap your cloth towels for paper and your cups for paper or plastic.

If your body is particularly run down and not well rested prior to getting sick, your symptoms will likely last longer than an individual who is well rested and not challenged by heavy stress.

## STRENGTHENING YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM:

- 1) **Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables (avoid fast food, snack foods, candy or soda)** to increase your levels of antioxidants or foods that help protect your cells from free radicals (molecules that can damage cells). Choose fruits and vegetables of different colors, such as oranges, green peppers, kiwi, strawberries, carrots, watermelon, papaya, leafy greens, cantaloupe , the powerful **anti-viral cabbage family** (#1 source: fresh sauerkraut & broccoli)& **mushroom extracts** . **Heavy food consumption** is to be avoided since it can make the immune system work harder.
- 2) While taking a multivitamin daily *is* helpful, experts suggest that larger doses of **Zinc** (tablets or lozenges) can help with a cold and the antioxidants **Vitamin C** (at least 1,000mg daily {also helps to strengthen infection-killing white blood cells}) and **Vitamin E** (400 I.U.'s daily) can help with both a cold and flu. Products like **Airborne** combine 1,000mg of Vitamin C, 8mg of Zinc as well as 11 other vitamins, minerals and herbs into an easy-to-use effervescent package.
- 3) Herbs that have proven beneficial include Echinacea, Andrographis, Garlic, Milk Thistle and Ginseng. Ayurvedic remedies (medicines of India) consist of herbal combinations: add Turmeric, Ginger and Garlic to rice. **Honey** and **Cinnamon** (one teaspoonful of each) has been used to promote health around the world for centuries. Take mixture at the first sign of a cold and then every couple of hours, especially during the first 2 days.
- 4) **Elderberries** is considered a highly effective **fast-acting immune booster** taken as a **tonic** or supplement (Sambucol). The berries ability to kill all types of viruses is especially valuable to help inactivate flu or influenza viruses, respiratory viruses and to destroy herpes virus which causes cold sores. Elderberries are exceptionally rich in anthocyanin's (anti-oxidants) which aid the immune system and protect all cells against viral infections
- 5). **Drink extra fluids to thin mucus**, especially nasal discharges (the first two to three days are most important). Recommendation: eight glasses of clean water per day (placing glasses of water in several rooms can help improve intake), daily broth/soups and supplement with sports drinks and sugar-free juices.

6). **Hot drinks**; especially herbal tea with a **tablespoonful of raw honey** and one-half a lemon, warms the airways, soothes the throat and helps to relieve congestion.

The antiviral prescription medication **Tamiflu** has been proven helpful by attacking the actual flu virus. **Tamiflu** works best if taken within the first two days of flu symptoms and is *not* to be used in infants under 12 months of age. For prevention (people over 12 months who were **exposed to the flu**), Tamiflu reduced the chance of getting the flu by 92%.

## **TREATING THE SYMPTOMS:**

**For infants and children who are all at greater risk of getting a cold or flu and of greater risk of experiencing negative consequences once they are sick (especially if they didn't receive a flu shot), consultation with a pediatrician is highly recommended. Early intervention**, especially with anti-viral medications is key to shortening the sick period and reducing the need for drug intervention.

**Children should avoid aspirin.** Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) liquid can be used safely for fever (no intervention unless fever exceeds 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit) and pain relief. Dosage is important and should be given by a licensed professional. Extra caution is needed to insure no overdose since these drugs are often mixed in with other multi-symptom cold and flu remedies.

**Children should avoid antibiotics** unless prescribed by their physician for a secondary bacterial infection. Cold and flu are caused by a virus and antibiotics only treat bacterial infections.

**Children under 4 years of age** should avoid all cough and cold medicines unless prescribed by a physician.

**Common traditional over the counter medications and natural remedies used to treat cough, colds and flu's are:**

**Saline Nasal Sprays:** Very safe and effective for both infants, children and adults. Not only does the spray help to break up mucus, but it also helps to keep mucous membranes moist and helps to remove viruses and bacteria from the nose. Saline spray can be purchased as traditional sprays, flushed nasal mists or saline nasal gels. Nasal douches, nasal wash or a **Netti-Pot** are also highly effective at helping to maintain nasal health. A nasal wash called **Alkalol**, which contains a mixture of alkaline oils, has been used since 1896.

**Sore Throats:** Gargling **often with warm water and sea salt** is an excellent first step to moisturize the back of the throat and to remove viruses and bacteria. A spoonful of **raw honey** taken undiluted or a tablespoon of honey added to herbal tea with half a lemon brings great relief. For an **itchy throat** consider using a tea with **tannin**, which helps to tighten membranes. Regular or sugar-free lozenges or drops are safe and often helpful (**Menthol** and **Eucalyptus Oil** soothes

pain; Benzocaine freezes pain). Common products include **Halls, Sucrets, Chloraseptic Spray, Cepacol, Burt's Bees, Ricola** and **Fisherman's Friend**.

**Coughs and Congestion:** Regular or sugar-free liquids, tablets or gel capsules (immediate acting or time-released) can often provide temporary relief. Common available over-the-counter (OTC) products include **Robitussin, Mucinex, Coricidin, Nyquil & Dayquil, Alka Seltzer, Dimetapp, Triaminic** or generic brands. All of the products include in different formulas the following active ingredients:

- 1) **Guaifenesin:** A highly effective **expectorant** which helps to loosen phlegm (mucus) and thin bronchial secretions to drain bronchial tubes. The guaifenesin in **Mucinex** is time released over a 12 hour period. Products with guaifenesin **should be avoided directly at bedtime** to prevent frequent trips out of bed to remove loose mucus. **Adequate sleep is critical to recovery.** For individuals with a history of respiratory problems (i.e. smokers, those prone to bronchitis) or have a hard time staying hydrated, taking an expectorant throughout the day is highly recommended.
- 2) **Acetaminophen:** A pain reliever which also reduces fever. In general, Acetaminophen or another pain reliever like **Ibuprofen** should *not* be taken until a **fever is over 100.5degrees Fahrenheit since you want the body to fight off the virus or bacteria by itself.**
- 3) **Dextromethorphan Hbr:** A synthetic cough suppressant which is similar to codeine but doesn't have the side effects of sedation or constipation. While safe and highly effective in recommended doses, products with this medication are often abused for its psychedelic effects.
- 4) **Nasal Decongestants:** **Pseudoephedrine** (Sudafed; tablets or liquids), **Phenylephrine** (liquid, tablets or Neo Synephrine spray), **Oxymetazoline** (Afrin or Sinex sprays), **Propylhexedrine** (Benzedrex Inhaler) and **Levmetafetamine** (Vick's Inhaler). By far, the most effective decongestant is Pseudoephedrine (patients will need to show ID for purchase) in immediate, time-released or combined formulation products (Claritin-D, Allegra-D, Aleve-D, Alavert-D, Mucinex-D and Zyrtec-D). Individuals with **uncontrolled hypertension** must avoid all nasal decongestant products. Those with controlled hypertension should request advice from their physician. **Nasal spray and inhaler products**, in particular, can become highly addictive and result in a dangerous so-called "rebound effect" (the individual first receives relief but after repeated use, the blood vessels of the nose swell larger as the drug wears off). The increased congestion often results in more frequent use of the spray or inhaler. More frequent use can lead to chest pain and visits to the emergency room.
- 5) **Antihistamines:** Doxylamine and Chlorpheniramine may help with allergies and are often included in a product for their sedative property (Nyquil).

**Natural Treatments** for sore throat, cough and congestion include:

- 1) **Hot liquids:** Herbal or green tea helps to soothe inflamed membranes and break up congestion and helps to keep an individual hydrated. Adding a tablespoon of raw honey and half a lemon to the tea helps the throat and cough and is a natural antibiotic. Adding a small shot of whiskey or bourbon to the tea can help with sleeping (the old “hot toddy”).
- 2) **Onion and Honey:** These cough medicines combine the antibacterial property of honey with the ability of a compound in onions found to **reduce bronchial constriction**. Chop an onion of any color and place in a jar. Cover onion bits with honey. Let it sit overnight and strain the next day, saving the fluid and discarding the onion pieces. For especially **hard coughs**, try six cloves of crushed garlic simmered in goat's milk with a tablespoon of honey added.
- 3) **Homeopathic Medicines:** Quick dissolving tablet forms are safe and potentially effective for both children and adults. In particular, **Belladonna-6C** is helpful for fevers that come on suddenly, clear running nose, headaches and inflames red sore throats. **Pulsatilla-6C** is used when nasal discharge is thicker and children are acting clingy and weepy. When taken at the first sign of flu-like symptoms, **Oscillocochinum** (*Anas barbariae hepatis*) can help reduce the duration and the severity of virus-producing illness
- 4) **Aromatherapy:** An approach that obtains aromatic, essential oils from herbs and flowers and assigns them as therapeutic treatments. The old standby **Vick's Vaporub** (Camphor, Eucalyptus Oil & Menthol) can be rubbed on the chest and feet. Mixing Eucalyptus and Peppermint essential oils with Coconut, Olive or Apricot oil can provide an equal effect. An antibacterial blend of **Clove, Lemon, Cinnamon Bark, Eucalyptus and Rosemary oils** appear to have a very high kill rate against airborne micro-organisms (both viruses and antibiotic-resistant).

### **MEDICAL INTERVENTION:**

**Colds and flu's, especially for infants, children, seniors and individuals with a history of asthma, chronic bronchitis, pneumonia or emphysema, that are lasting for an extended period of time or are producing severe symptoms should receive immediate medical intervention.**

**Taking an anti-viral medication like “Tamiflu” or a strong fast-acting anti-viral herbal product like “Elderberry Tonic” can be effective in limiting the duration of a flu if taken within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms. It is highly recommended that high risk children and seniors, in particular, prepare for flu and cold season by building-up their immune systems with daily immune-boosting foods and supplements and to have emergency access to prescription authorization for early intervention (video-conferencing and phone consultation can limit direct visits to the doctor’s office).**

When a cough and congestion becomes threatening, a physician may often write for a product that contains the expectorant (Guaifenesin) and the **cough suppressant codeine** (Cheratussin AC) or add the antihistamine **promethazine** instead of the expectorant (Promethazine with Codeine syrup) to help the coughing and need to sleep. For deeper chest congestion and hard coughing, a 12-hour (extended-release) product like **Hydrocodone and Chlorpheniramine Polistirex suspension (Tussionex) or benzotate capsules (Yellow Pearls)** may be prescribed.

When a bacterial infection has been diagnosed (i.e. acute sinusitis or bronchitis) or if there is a serious risk of respiratory or secondary problems (especially for high risk patients), an **antibiotic** may be prescribed to help arrest the acute condition or to prevent against further complications.

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