

Six Natural Ways to Avoid the Cold and the Flu

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1. Rest up to restore your immunity. Studies show that your immune system function drops by an average of 60% after just three nights of poor sleep, so be sure you are getting plenty of quality rest, at least eight hours each night. Can't fall asleep or stay asleep? Try taking a hot bath at night before bedtime or soak your feet in Epsom salt bath for 15 minutes. It will help relax your mind and body in preparation for your sleep.

2. Eat sweet potatoes and mushrooms. These foods help optimize your body's immunity function. Sweet potatoes contain higher amounts of vitamin C and beta-carotene than carrots, as well as being rich in plant source DHEA, a potent immunity booster. Certain types of mushrooms, like shiitake, maitake and reishi, contain polysaccharides, sterols, coumarin, vitamins, minerals, and amino acids that have been found to increase immune functions and activities.

3. Garlic keeps more than vampires away. Throughout human history garlic has been loved as well as loathed. Loved by those who enjoy its intense aroma and pungent flavors and loathed by those who are repelled by its odor. The strong odor of garlic actually comes from a sulfur-compound called allicin that studies have found to be a powerful antibacterial and antiviral agent. Not only has it been shown to be effective against colds, flu, stomach virus and candida yeast, it has also been shown to be effective against antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria such as MRSA. Besides repelling microbes, apparently even vampires don't like it either.

4. Vitamin C to your rescue. The late Nobel laureate Linus Pauling did pioneering research on the benefits of vitamin C. It is regarded as the safest and most effective nutrient. A recent look at over 100 studies on vitamin C in the last 10 years revealed many conclusive benefits of vitamin. Not the least is its well-known property of supporting immune functions especially when the immune system is suppressed by stress. It may not prevent the common cold or the flu but it can reduce the risk of complications like pneumonia and lung infections. One can safely take up to 2,000 mg of vitamin C daily.

5. Look to nature for ammunition. Throughout Europe and Asia, pharmacies offer herbal medicine alongside drug medication. It's indicative that people in other cultures recognize the benefits of nature's herbal remedies. As a result these cultures are generally healthier than ours. Luckily the U.S. is catching up. It's easier now more than ever to find herbal remedies in your local drug and health food stores. Herbs with known immune system properties include ligustri, Cherokee rose, honeysuckle, astragalus, and all heal (prunella). These and other herbs constitute a formula called *Perpetual Shield* that I put my entire family on during the cold-flu season.

6. Play stronger defense with acupuncture. Acupuncture is part of a complete medical system from China. By stimulating select acupoints in the body to elicit innate healing responses, acupuncture has been used for thousands of years to support the body's defense against diseases such as the common cold. Studies of cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy have found that acupuncture increases production of white blood cells -- an indicator of an active immune system. Other studies have found acupuncture to possess immune-modulating properties, which means that it can also help decrease inflammation in conditions like allergic asthma and arthritis. For a directory of licensed acupuncturist in your area, log on to acupuncture.com

If it's too late to prepare, and you are already suffering from the runny nose, sore throat, headache and fever of cold and flu, we often recommend to patients the *Cold and Flu Formula* that contains natural herbs like burdock, kudzu, forsythia, indigo, mint and others that support healthy immune function, and comfort cold and flu symptoms. I hope you use these suggestions in times of health and sickness and that they serve you well.

Reference website: Six Natural Ways to Avoid the Cold and the Flu