



Beating the Flu Naturally

Written by Jill Grunewald and published in part in tastebud magazine, Jan. 2010

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Over the last few months, several people have asked me how to both avoid and treat the flu, any type of flu, naturally. Indeed, there is an abundance of natural ways to boost immunity (possibly thwarting the nasty bug in the first place), to relieve painful and irritating symptoms, and to send pathogens packin' once they do invade.

Below is a list of some powerful nutritional, homeopathic, and herbal remedies. In addition to incorporating some of these into your regime, it's also best to avoid dairy, sugar, caffeine, and alcohol.

Immune-boosting (and yummy) foods:

- **Reishi, maitake, and shitake mushrooms** – powerful immune response boosters
- **Garlic** – blocks enzymes that help viruses spread and also combats bacteria and fungi (best eaten raw, but cooked is still beneficial)
- **All beta carotene super stars** – pumpkin, Brussels sprouts, carrots, kale, sweet potatoes, and spinach; these are high in antioxidants and protect the lining of your lungs and digestive system, which guard against infection
- **Sunflower seeds** – high in vitamin E, which helps you resist flu and upper respiratory infections
- **Ginger** – anti-inflammatory powerhouse that eases congestion and warms the body; ginger tea is also great sore throat remedy
- **Brazil nuts** – very high in selenium, which thwarts bacteria and viruses (a few, every few days, is all you need, as too much selenium isn't good for the body)
- **Grassfed beef** – great source of zinc and selenium
- **High-antioxidant herbs and spices** - such as cinnamon, turmeric, oregano, and cloves

Natural remedies:

- **Star anise** – Be sure to get Chinese star anise, not Japanese, as Japanese star anise can be toxic. This is the “secret ingredient” in Tamiflu; it boosts immune function and helps the body fight off many strains of the flu. You can use the oil (can be difficult to find) or you can place about five stars in boiling water, steep, and drink.
- **Astragalus** – powerful antiviral that boosts immune function and builds resistance against the flu and the common cold
- **Olive leaf extract** – broad spectrum anti-viral that lessens intensity of infection
- **Slippery elm** – coats the throat, relieving cough and soreness (make tea, or look for the lozenges)

HEALTHFUL ELEMENTS



- **Licorice** – throat soother and immune booster (not to be used by people with high blood pressure)
- **Eupatorium perfoliatum** – homeopathic remedy that helps sooth deep body aches associated with the flu
- **Grapefruit** – helps reduce fever
- **Fenugreek tea** – helps reduce fever
- **Eucalyptus oil** – This oil is great for clearing lung congestion. Boil a pot of water. Once the water stops bubbling, add several drops of essential oil to the water. Allow the water to cool slightly. Then hold your head over the pot, and breathe in the steam. Capture the steam by draping a large towel or throw blanket over your head and the pot, creating a "tent." Usually, five to ten minutes of steam should be sufficient to clear your congestion. Keep your face far enough from the water so that the steam does not irritate or burn your skin. Take several deep, full breaths to clear lung congestion.

One particular nutrient that gets quite a bit of attention this time of year is vitamin D. Dr. Joseph Mercola states that it's the number one way to fight the flu. He says, "Vitamin D is an amazingly effective antimicrobial agent, producing 200 to 300 different antimicrobial peptides in your body that kill bacteria, viruses, and fungi. As temperatures drop, we begin to congregate indoors and spend less time in the sun. This means our vitamin D levels begin to drop, and we are more apt to spread viruses from one person to another.

"Remarkably, researchers have found that 2,000 IU of vitamin D per day abolished seasonal influenza. This is somewhat surprising, as it is half the dose of what most adults need to achieve ideal levels of vitamin D. In order to prevent the flu, children and adults need 35 IU of vitamin D per pound of body weight. So, for example, a child weighing 57 pounds would need 2,000 IU a day of vitamin D."

Here's to a healthy flu season for you and your family!

DISCLAIMER: I'm not claiming that these suggestions will prevent or cure the flu. I am not advising anyone to follow the protocol that I would follow, nor am not giving medical advice. Herbs act like drugs, so use them only under supervision of a medical professional.