

# Surviving the Cold and the Flu, A Personal Experience

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**M**any of us dread the cold, wet, dark winter season. Winter means we'll need to contend with viral colds and flu. Around the month of September, I start strengthening my immune system with herbal tinctures and teas that include astragalus, reishi mushrooms, elderberry, and ginger. I eat phyto-rich foods such as dark green, red, and yellow vegetables and fruits. I avoid eating processed foods that are high in sugar and avoid drinking excessive alcohol. Instead, I opt for green tea which is high in antioxidants to boost my immune system. I make sure to get 8 hours sleep, maintain regular physical exercise, and attempt to manage my stress with yoga or chi-gong. I wash my hands often and avoid touching the moist areas of my eyes, nose, mouth. I avoid sharing germs by not sharing other people's cups, glasses and utensils.

If you do develop a viral head cold, you may experience a gradual onset of fatigue, sore throat, sneezing, nasal congestion and/or a dry cough. Usually fever and body aches will be absent. Flu symptoms, in contrast, usually come on suddenly and include chills, headache, muscle aches, fever and sore throat. At the first onset of a head cold, I recommend you slow down and get plenty of rest, 8-10 hours sleep. Drink plenty fluids such as herbal tea, fresh ginger tea with honey and orange juice. You may add

about ¼ teaspoon powdered vitamin C into your liquids 3-4 times a day to reduce your symptoms and duration of illness. Be sure to decrease the frequency of vitamin C if you develop diarrhea. Eating homemade chicken soup with broccoli, carrots, onions, and garlic will help fight the virus. Again, avoid processed sugar which will feed the virus!

Here are more suggestions that have worked for me. Most of the items can be found at your local herbal stores where you may get assistance from certified herbalists.

- Gargle with warm salt water frequently for 2 minutes.
- Take Yin Chiao, a Chinese herbal supplement, at the first sign of a cold.
- Drink Fire Cider, a spicy cider vinegar to treat your cold.
- Take Coldcalm, a homeopathic remedy by Boiron for relief of cold symptoms
- Try drinking warm or hot water with 1 drop of lemon and peppermint, both have antiviral properties.
- Apply 1 drop of the powerful oregano essential oil which is an antiviral immune stimulant, and antiseptic to the respiratory system. Mix with almond or olive oil and apply to the bottom of your feet.
- Breath steaming water with 1 drop of eucalyptus oil (an antiviral, anti-inflammatory, expectorant) to ease nasal congestion.

Flu symptoms are more intense and have

a longer duration than do colds. I have found homeopathy to be very useful in treating flu symptoms. Homeopathy was successful in the prevention and treatment of the Spanish Flu in 1918. It may reduce the severity as well as prevent complications and speed up the recovery time. Homeopathy is a holistic medicine which uses highly diluted substances which trigger the body's own healing. It is safe for all ages, including small children. Influenzinum is a homeopathic remedy that is manufactured each year for the current strain of flu. It can be taken once a week during the flu season, usually until mid April or more often if exposed to an infected person to prevent catching it. At the first sign of symptoms, you can take it 2-3 times a day until symptom relief is obtained.

There are also several homeopathic remedies that can be taken after contracting the flu. These are gelsemium, eupatorium perfoliatum, arsenicum alba, byronia, mercurius solubilis, nux vomica, baptisia, rhus toxicodendrum. It is always best to contact a homeopath to help decide which of these remedies fits your unique flu symptoms. If you are unable to find a homeopath to assist you, I have also had great success having on hand the homeopathic remedy Oscillococcinum to take at the first onset of the flu symptoms, fever, chills, body aches. It has been known to stop the advancement of the flu or lessen the severity of the flu. PLEASE NOTE: If you develop a severe headache, rigid neck, a fever higher than 104, shortness of breath with a productive cough, you must seek medical attention to rule out meningitis or pneumonia which could in rare cases develop in acute respiratory failure. As always, include your primary caregiver when using herbal treatments.



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