

Immune building and boosting with Herbs

by Michael Vertolli

Using Herbal Medicine to keep the immune system strong and to speed up healing when struck with a cold or flu.

With flu and cold season upon us you may wonder what can be done to keep you and your family healthy and if there are alternatives to going on prescription drugs. Herbal Medicine can be used preventatively to strengthen and boost immune function. Herbs may also be used very effectively during acute conditions such as colds and flu's to speed up healing. Next time you come down with a cold or flu, visit your local herbalist who can make you up a personalized remedy that will help to support and accelerate the body's healing process.

Immune function can be strengthened using herbs that are readily available. Echinacea is an example of an excellent immune boosting herb and immune tonic. It can be taken as a preventative during cold and flu season. It should be taken for 1-2 weeks followed by a 1-2 week break. Echinacea may be taken this way for 2-3 cycles. It should be taken in the form of an herbal tincture and may be taken 1/2 tsp, 3 times a day. If you are starting to feel something come on, such as a cold or flu or scratchy throat, Echinacea may be taken at 1/2 tsp, 6 times per day until symptoms subside.

For sore, scratchy throats also try an herbal gargle (see recipe below) or garlic honey syrup (see recipe below).

To ensure a healthy immune system, diet and lifestyle factors and nutrient supplementation are also important. It is important to eat a diet that is high in fruits and vegetables, whole grains and unprocessed foods, which will nourish the immune system and help it to function more effectively. Consistently eating foods that are nutritionally depleted may result in chronic immune weakness and slow recovery time. There are many lifestyle factors that have a negative effect on immune function. Stress is one of the major factors that may have a detrimental effect on the immune system. People who are chronically stressed tend to be more frequently sick. It is important to develop skills on how to deal with increased stress so that we have more control as to how we react to stress. Meditation, yoga, tai chi and exercise are all excellent ways to help the body deal with stress. Nutritional supplements that are supportive to the immune system and may be taken during cold and flu season include:

1. A good quality multi-vitamin (Flora, Naka, Nu-life, Sisu or Natural Factors) to ensure adequate levels of nutrients.
2. Vitamin C (in the form of ester C)-Sisu is a good brand- take 2000-3000 Mg per day in divided doses.
3. Zinc citrate (50 Mg)-Natural Factors is a good brand-1 tablet per day.

Antiseptic Throat Gargle Tea

1 tsp Dried Thyme
1 tsp Dried Sage
1 cup Boiling water

Place dried herbs in a teapot or covered ceramic or glass container then add the boiling water, cover and let steep for 15 minutes. Strain and let cool to room temperature. Gargle and swallow as many times as needed. This tea may be kept in the fridge for 2-3 days and taken out as needed.

Garlic Honey Throat and Cough Syrup

4-6 cloves of garlic
1/4 cup raw unpasteurised liquid honey

Chop garlic finely, add to honey. Let sit out at room temperature for 2-3 hours. Take 1 tsp of the liquid as needed. This mixture may be kept in a small jar at room temperature; it will keep for 2-3 days. This syrup should not be given to children less than 1 year old.