

19 Ways to Prevent and Treat COLDS & FLU

Stay well this winter with these proven strategies for fending off and bouncing back from colds and flu.

By Megan Hirt

The telltale scratchy throat. Miserable nasal congestion. Lethargy tinged with aches and chills.

We all know the signs of a cold or flu settling in, about to derail us—however temporarily—from our day-to-day lives. If your first thought when cold or flu symptoms arise is to reach for an over-

the-counter formula, consider this: In the United States, we spend billions every year trying to knock out these maladies, but most of that money goes to treatments that only suppress symptoms and do little to spur healing.

With the following preventive measures and simple, natural cold and flu remedies, you can save money, take control of your health, and trim your time spent feeling under the weather this cold and flu season.

Cold and Flu Prevention Strategies

Colds and flu spread primarily via droplets released in the air when someone who is ill coughs, sneezes or talks, and via surface contact (touching something a sick person has touched). The surest natural way to lessen your odds of falling ill is to tweak some of your habits.

Cough and Sneeze Into Your Elbow. Instead of covering your cough with your hand, turn your head and cough into your elbow, which will sequester a virus just as well. Your elbow, however, is far less likely than your hands to come in contact with people or surfaces.

Wash Up Often. The more frequently you wash your hands, the lower your risk of becoming sick. Remember: Colds and flu are caused by *viruses*—not bacteria—so banking on antibacterial soap

Soup's on! A warm, hearty soup packed with cold- and flu-fighting foods can be both comforting and curative.



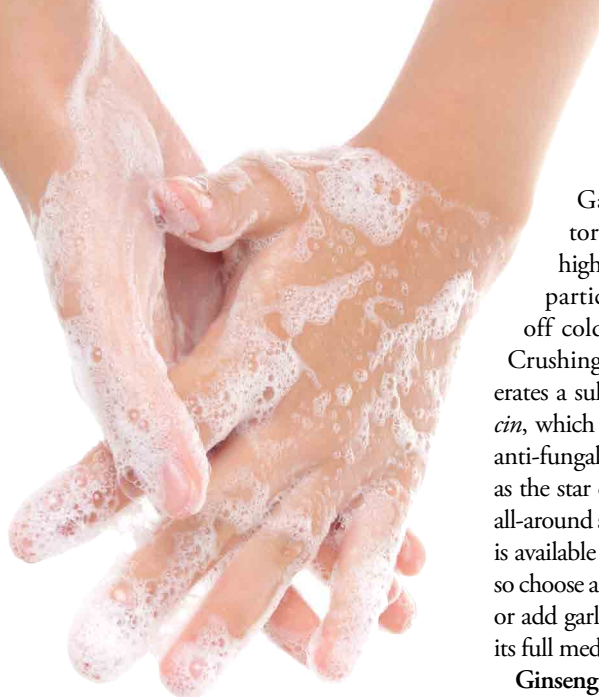
as a safeguard against colds and flu won't be effective. Studies have shown that washing your hands with an antibacterial soap is no better at preventing infectious illnesses than scrubbing with plain soap and water. Moreover, there's mounting evidence that triclosan—the main active ingredient in many antibacterial soaps—may facilitate the growth of resistant bacteria.

Hands Off Your Face. A 2008 study from the University of California, Berkeley found that the typical person makes the hand-to-face connection an average of 16 times per hour. If you refrain from touching your eyes, nose and lips, you drastically reduce the likelihood of a virus entering your body.

Avoid Touching Surfaces Others Touch. Encourage your workplace to outfit bathroom doors with foot-operated openers—try the StepNpull, www.StepNpull.com—that allow for a hands-free exit. Block contact with faucets, door handles and other heavily trafficked surfaces in public restrooms by cloaking your grip in a paper towel.

Consider Copper Surfaces. Copper and copper alloys (brass, bronze) have inherent antimicrobial properties that make them capable of reducing the spread of infection. A 2009 study from Selly Oak Hospital in England found that frequently touched items in a hospital setting that were made of copper—including grab handles, door push plates and toilet seats—harbored up to 95 percent fewer microorganisms compared with the same items made of standard materials such as stainless steel. Numerous follow-up studies of copper's antiviral properties indicate copper surfaces could be an effective means of reducing the spread of colds and flu—and even superbug bacteria such as MRSA—if this prevention tactic were widely adopted. Check out copper products for your home or business at www.AntimicrobialCopper.com.

Get Regular Exercise. While colder weather may trigger an urge to curl up in the sedentary comfort of a blanket, moving your body will actually boost its immune function. In a 2006 study, researchers at the



Proper hand hygiene: Scrub with water (warm or cold) and plain soap for at least 20 seconds.

University of Washington enrolled 115 women in either a weekly 45-minute stretching session or 45 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise five days a week. After 12 months, the exercisers had developed significantly fewer colds than the stretchers did. You needn't necessarily carve out time for jogging or the like, either: Everyday chores such as raking leaves or shoveling snow can count as moderate-intensity exercise.

Herbs for Preventing Colds and Flu

Scientific research supports the use of the following herbs to help stave off colds and flu. (See Page 66 for recommended resources for determining dosage, instructions for making herbal teas, infusions and tinctures, and more.)

Garlic (*Allium sativum*).

Garlic's long and storied history of healing includes earning high marks as an antiviral, and it's particularly valuable for warding off colds and helping open sinuses. Crushing or cutting garlic cloves generates a sulfur compound known as *allicin*, which has antiviral, antibacterial and anti-fungal properties and is oft-credited as the star component that gives garlic its all-around stellar healing repertoire. *Allicin* is available only from raw garlic, however, so choose a preparation that calls for it raw, or add garlic at the end of cooking to tap its full medicinal power.

Ginseng (*Panax ginseng*, *P. quinquefolius*). In a 2005 study, Canadian researchers gave 279 adults either a daily placebo or 400 milligrams a day of ginseng. Four months later, the ginseng group had contracted considerably fewer colds. University of Connecticut researchers repeated the study and arrived at the same conclusion, deeming ginseng “a safe, natural means for preventing acute respiratory illness.” In his book *The Green Pharmacy*, Dr. James A. Duke suggests a daily dose of about 1 teaspoon ginseng steeped in a cup of boiling water to make a tea.

Eleuthero (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*). Also known as “Siberian ginseng,” this herb isn't related to ginseng but has similar effects, including immune-boosting antiviral action. Take daily as a tea of about 1 teaspoon eleuthero root steeped in 1 cup boiling water.

Mushrooms. Maitake mushrooms (*Grifola frondosa*), reishi mushrooms (*Ganoderma lucidum*) and shiitake mushrooms (*Lentinula edodes*) rev up the immune system to defend against a number of viruses. Maitake mushrooms aren't easy to find fresh, so try ordering them dried (www.OregonMushrooms.com is one mail-order source). Reishi mushrooms are rather unpleasant-tasting and aren't used as a food (take them as capsules instead), but go ahead and eat your fill of robust, scrumptious shiitakes.



Could garlic be the tastiest medicine known to planet Earth? We think so.

Astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*). This antiviral and immune-strengthening herb has been a principal player in traditional Chinese medicine for millennia. In *Herbal Antibiotics*, author Stephen Harrod Buhner recommends a daily pot of tea containing 2 to 3 ounces astragalus root. Or, enlist astragalus along with garlic as part of an immune-enhancing soup broth, Buhner suggests.

Natural Cold and Flu Remedies

Should your prevention measures fall short—and they likely will at some point—try these natural means to lessen a cold or flu's impact and duration.

Chicken Soup. In a laboratory study published in 2000, University of Nebraska researchers found this centuries-old remedy can indeed relieve symptoms of an upper respiratory tract infection. Specifically, chicken soup eased the inflammation of throat cells that can cause cold symptoms. The researchers weren't able to identify a



Get a "hand" from ginger this winter: Along with its cold-combating capabilities, ginger is also a well-documented stomach soother.

precise ingredient responsible for the alleviation, but they theorized a combination of the soup's components working together gave it its benefit. The recipe tested featured chicken broth, onions, sweet potatoes, parsnips, turnips, carrots, celery stems, parsley, salt and pepper. Many veggies, particularly onions, have anti-inflammatory properties.

Ginseng. In addition to ginseng's value in cold prevention, research from the

University of Connecticut (mentioned previously) also showed ginseng cut severity of cold symptoms in half.

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*). Within this knobby, pungent rhizome reside nearly a dozen antiviral compounds. Notably, ginger contains chemicals known as *sesquiterpenes* that specifically fight rhinoviruses, the leading cause of the common cold.

Dr. Duke recommends concocting a soothing ginger tea by pouring boiling water over 2 tablespoons of fresh, shredded ginger root.

Herbalist Rosemary Gladstar blends ginger with another time-honored healer—honey (keep reading)—for the Ginger Lemon-Aide recipe in her book *Medicinal Herbs: A Beginner's Guide*. To make, combine 4 to 6 tablespoons freshly grated ginger root with 1 quart cold water and bring to just a boil. Remove heat and let steep for 10 to 15 minutes. Strain ginger from tea, and stir in the juice of 1 to 2 fresh lemons along with honey to taste.



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Juniper (*Juniperus* spp). Juniper berries boast a powerful antiviral compound known as *deoxydopodophyllotoxin*. For upper respiratory tract infections, Buhner advises turning to the woody-smelling essential oil of juniper. Place eight to 10 drops of juniper essential oil in water in a 1-ounce nasal spray bottle. Use four to six times per day, shaking the mixture before each use.

Hot Drinks and Honey. Any warming drink can help soothe a sore throat, suppress a cough, and calm the overall commotion of a cold or flu. Honey coats the throat and relieves irritation while its antioxidant and antimicrobial properties go to work fighting viral infections. Try Buhner's Colds and Flu Tea: 2 tablespoons ginger juice, juice of 1/4 lime, pinch cayenne pepper, 1 tablespoon honey, and hot water.

Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) and Slippery Elm (*Ulmus rubra*). Each of this trio provides remarkable relief for sore throats. Try a tea of licorice root and

slippery elm bark, and put horehound leaves to work in homemade cough drops (find our tried-and-true horehound cough drop recipe at <http://goo.gl/Z74La>). 🌿

A honey of a remedy: Add this sweet and inexpensive healing agent to your warm beverages.



HONEY: DREAMSTIME, PAGE 64; FOTOLIA

RESOURCES

DOSAGE RECOMMENDATIONS

Herbal Antibiotics by Stephen Harrod Buhner (order on Page 81)

The Complete German Commission E Monographs from the American Botanical Council

MORE INFORMATION

Medicinal Herbs: A Beginner's Guide by Rosemary Gladstar (order on Page 81)

The Green Pharmacy by James A. Duke

"How to Make Herbal Teas, Infusions and Tinctures" by Rosemary Gladstar
Go to <http://goo.gl/CJgQZ>

HERB SOURCES

Mountain Rose Herbs: 800-879-3337;
www.MountainRoseHerbs.com

Sage Woman Herbs: 888-350-3911;
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