

The Wellness Express

Jump on the train to good health

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Natural Remedies for the Common Cold

Presented by:

“They can put a man on the moon, but they can’t find a cure for the common cold” is the old cliché we have been saying since we landed on our lunar companion over 40 years ago. Yet, we seem no closer to curing this annoying affliction. The average person gets a cold two to four times a year. In North America, the common cold costs the economy about \$20 billion annually in lost productivity and medical expenses.

A cold is a viral infection that affects the upper respiratory tract. Because it is a virus, a cold does not respond to antibiotics, which only treat bacterial infections. The reason it is so difficult to find a cure for the common cold is that so many viruses actually can cause it.

Does the Cold Cause Colds?

Before the advent of modern medicine, people thought the common cold was caused by exposure to cool temperatures. Evidence of this is inconclusive. Medical experts believe the increase of the common cold during winter is the result of people spending more times indoors, and the enclosed space makes it easier for the highly contagious virus to spread.

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But there is some research that suggests cold temperatures may weaken the immune system, allowing easier access for viruses.

While echinacea is the herb most widely associated for the treatment of colds, it’s not the only natural remedy available. In this issue of Wellness Express, we’ll take a look at herbs and other natural products that can help boost your immune system and offer relief from cold symptoms.

NOTE: Although they’re natural substances, herbs can negatively interact with some medications - and even other herbs. They may also be dangerous for certain health conditions, pregnant women, nursing mothers and children. Always consult your chiropractor, pharmacist or physician before using herbs and supplements.

Astragalus

Found largely in Northern China, astragalus has played a prominent role in Chinese herbal medicine for thousands of years. It is recommended for boosting the immune system.



Exercise of the Week

Extension

Difficulty: Easy

(Consult your chiropractor before doing this or any other exercise.)

Start: Place a mat on floor. Position your body as shown in Image #1, with spine in a neutral position.

Exercise: Try to move spine into a fully extended position. Concentrate on bringing belly button toward floor, relaxing muscles of spine. Bring chin up toward ceiling as well. Hold for 15-30 seconds. Return to neutral position and rest for 15 seconds. Repeat 5-10X.



Astragalus is a type of legume, but it is the plant's dried roots that are used for medicinal purposes, and it is frequently administered medicinally as a tea or soup.

Research shows astragalus can fuel increases in the body's levels of interferon (proteins that attack pathogens like viruses) and macrophages (white blood cells that defend against immune system threats).¹

Andrographis paniculata

Andrographis is another herb extensively used in Asian herbal medicine, especially in India and Sri Lanka. Both leaves and roots of the andrographis plant are used for medical purposes.

Its reputation for assisting the immune system has spread far beyond Asia. Andrographis supplements are widely used in Sweden to protect the immune system during the cold and flu season.

A review of randomized controlled studies of andrographis published in the *Journal of Clinical Pharmacy and Therapeutics* showed the herb was effective in treating upper respiratory infections.² And in a study from Chile, andrographis was effective in drying congested nasal passages.

Cat's Claw

Named for its claw-shaped horns, cat's claw is a vine that grows in the jungles of South America. It has been used for centuries in this region to treat disease and reduce fever. Recent scientific investigation has found cat's claw has both anti-inflammatory and immunostimulant properties.

Elderberry

These berries are abundant in Germany and Austria, where they are processed and sold as liquid extract to reduce cold and flu symptoms, such as fever and headaches. Elderberry is loaded with antioxidants, which help protect cells from invasion by viruses.

An Israeli study showed an elderberry extract's effectiveness in treating influenza B (Panama). According to the research, the flu sufferers treated with elderberry extract were cured in two to three days, compared to six days for the placebo group.³

Eucalyptus oil

The oil is made from the pungent leaves of the eucalyptus tree, predominantly found in Australia. The aboriginal people in that country often used the leaves as medicine and science has shown eucalyptus has antimicrobial properties. Its oil is a natural way to help reduce congestion caused by colds. Adding a few drops of oil to hot water and inhaling the steam is one of the most popular ways to benefit from this remedy. Germany's government health regulatory agency has approved Eucalyptus oil for the treatment of upper respiratory infections.

* * *

Herbs are not the only way to help prevent colds and flu this winter. Chiropractic has been proven to boost your immune system. Be sure to get regular chiropractic adjustments to keep your body prepared against the cold and flu season.

Quote to Inspire

"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced."

- James Baldwin

References and Sources:

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3. Inhibition of Several Strains of Influenza Virus in Vitro and Reduction of Symptoms by an Elderberry Extract (*Sambucus nigra* L.) during an Outbreak of Influenza B Panama - *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* - Winter 1995, 1(4): 361-369.

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