

Cold & Flu Treatment Strategies

Dr. Garrett G. Swetlikoff, N.D.

The common cold and flu are two of the leading causes of doctor visits in Canada. Adults average 2-4 colds per year and children 6-10 depending on age and exposure. More than 100 different viruses and substrains are responsible for these infections, which typically occur in the fall, winter and spring. Although most people infected survive with little or no complications, several thousand Canadians die from influenza annually.

Symptoms often start with a tickle or soreness in the throat, followed by sneezing, runny nose, nasal congestion and general malaise. Chills, fever, body aches, headache, eye soreness and cough often follow. Susceptible or weakened individuals may develop bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia, bacterial sinus infection or encephalitis. Most colds and flu resolve within 7-10 days, however, the cough and fatigue can last for weeks.

Conventional therapies for these infections focus on symptom relief and include anti-fever drugs, anti-inflammatories, decongestants and prescription antiviral agents. Flu vaccines are available as part of the annual influenza prevention program.

The naturopathic medical approach for colds and flu is a two prong line of attack.

1. Enhance the general health of the patient by decreasing risk factors that lower immunity and increase infection susceptibility.
2. Once infected, use methods that stimulate the immune system and reduce the viral load, thus shortening the duration and severity of symptoms and preventing complications.

Avoid sugar and processed white flour products – sugar decreases immune function and limits your ability to fight off viruses and other illnesses.

Eat super foods – garlic, colourful fruits, vegetables, good oils (like olive, fish and coconut) and probiotics (acidophilus) are a few examples of foods that support our immune systems.

Get enough rest – poor quality sleep and fatigue contribute to poor health.



Reduce stress – you cannot separate the body from the mind and chronic stress in all of its forms takes a toll on the body.

Exercise – regular physical activity increases circulation and improves immune system function and is great for body, mind and spirit.

Wash your hands - regular hand washing decreases the likelihood of spreading viruses to your nose, mouth or other people.

Vitamin C – this controversial vitamin appears to help if given in large frequent doses -1000 mg hourly for the first 1-2 days.


Zinc Lozenges – 10-15 mg lozenges sucked on 4-6 times daily at the onset of a sore throat.

Vitamin A – 50,000-100,000 IU daily under the supervision of your healthcare practitioner. High doses of vitamin A cannot be used long term due to toxicity and should not be used if trying to get pregnant.

Vitamin D – 2000-4000 IU daily in sun deficient winter months to prevent colds and flu.

Botanicals – Echinacea, Garlic, Ginseng, Olive leaf extract, and Astragalus are a few well studied herbs used for infections.

Homeopathy – A multitude of single and combination remedies are useful for treating viral infections. Consider Ferrum phos, Belladonna, Aconite, Bryonia, Gelsemium, Thymuline and Influenzinum.

Always consult a qualified health provider if self treatment is inadequate or complications arise. 

Seminar:

Dr. Swetlikoff will be holding a seminar on Cold & Flu Management Strategies on Monday, November 19 2007, 7:00-8:30pm at Choices Markets Kelowna, 1937 Harvey Ave. Cost is \$5 at the door, proceeds to charity. To register, please call (250)862-4864, Monday to Friday, 8:00-4:30.



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