

## Staying Healthy during Cold & Flu Season:

How can you keep yourself from getting a cold or flu? Talk to your doctor about the following, to be sure it will not interfere with other treatment you are receiving:

- ❖ **Wash your hands** carefully and frequently during cold and flu season.
- ❖ Manage your **stress** – a study showed that job stress was one of the biggest risk factors predicting severity of illness in volunteers exposed to equal amounts of cold virus, and epidemiology shows that those with more stress have a 3-4x higher chance of catching cold. *Behav Med* 1992 Fall;18(3):115-20, *N Engl J Med* 1991 Aug 29;325(9):606-12, *Epidemiology* 2001 May;12(3):345-9
- ❖ Eat **garlic** regularly or consider a garlic capsule with allicin. *Adv Ther* 2001 Jul-Aug. 18(4):189-93 Those taking garlic had fewer colds (24 vs. 65), and shorter symptoms with colds (1.52 vs. 5.01 days)
- ❖ Eat well, including at least 5 servings of fruits and veggies every day, or take a **multivitamin with minerals**, or, preferably, a **fruit/vegetable extract** if you are not able to eat right. *Archives of Internal Medicine* 1999 159(7):748-54, *Children's research study*, 2002, www.childrensresearch.org.
- ❖ Regular **Vitamin D** may decrease the frequency and severity of respiratory infections. 1200 IU per day in schoolkids, 800 – 2000 IU per day in adults. *Cannell JJ et al Epidemic Influenza and vitamin D Epidemiol. Infect.* (2006), 134, 1129–1140 *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2010 May;91(5):1255-60
- ❖ Regular **zinc** also can be preventive (15 – 40 mg per day) *Cochrane Database Syst Rev.* 2011 Feb 16;2:CD001364
- ❖ Probiotics (*acidophilus*, *bifidus*) decreases the frequency and severity of respiratory infections in children. *Pediatrics.* 2009 Aug;124(2):e172-9. Epub 2009 Jul 27
- ❖ AVOID eating refined sugar (small amounts of honey ok), and dairy products while you are sick. Excess refined sugar can temporarily suppress your immune system, and milk products tend to make nasal congestion worse.
- ❖ Get a **flu shot** if you are in a high risk group:
  - Age over 50, or definitely over 65
  - People with chronic lung disease, including asthma and COPD
  - People living with HIV
  - Women who will be in second and third trimester of pregnancy during flu season
- ❖ Ask about a Pneumovax (Vaccine to prevent pneumonia) as well

### How do you know if you have a cold or the flu?

Common Cold	Influenza
Gradual onset of symptoms	Abrupt onset
Low-grade fever	Significant fever, usually >100 degrees F
	Chills sweats, fatigue
Less achiness	Muscle aches
Sore, itchy throat, stuffy and/or runny nose	Sore, itchy throat, runny nose
Sneezing	Photophobia (pain with bright light)

**If you have the flu, there are some medications that can decrease the length and severity of your illness, but they must be started on the first or second day you are sick, so you're call your clinic immediately!!**

- **Oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) 13 years +, 75 mg bid x 5 days**
- **Zanamivir (Relenza®) 5 years +, two 5-mg inhalations BID (not with asthma or COPD)**

Other Things That Help For INFLUENZA:

- **Elderberry extract** – 1 tablespoon 4 x daily. *J Altern Complement Med* 1995 Winter;1(4):361-9. Improved flu recovery time to 2 days from 6 days in the placebo group.

Things that help with a COLD:

**Pelargonium (Umcka)** 30-60 drops three times daily reduced the duration of colds and decreased the severity of symptoms. *Explore (NY)*. 2007 Nov-Dec;3(6):573-84.

**Andrographis** 400 mg three times daily reduced symptoms at 2 days, even more dramatic difference by 4 days. *Phytotherapy* 1999 Oct 6(4):217-23 Also effective in sore throat. *J Med Assoc Thai* 1991 74(10):824-9

**Zinc acetate lozenges** can shorten the course (dissolve in your mouth every couple hours for the first few days) – watch for nausea as a side effect *Ann Intern Med* 2000 Aug 15;133(4):245

**Vitamin C** 2 -5 grams per day: 9% - 37 % reduction in symptom days in multiple clinical trials with > or = 1 gram per day *Cochrane Dbase Syst Rev* 2000; 2:CD000980

For symptom relief, we recommend:

- **Steam inhalations** – run the shower hot and steam up your bathroom, or heat a pot of water and drop in a drop or two of essential oils (we particularly recommend eucalyptus/thyme and orange oil) and breath the steam. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2001;(4):CD001728
- A **vaporizer** at night can make it easier to sleep. It is a great thing to have around for babies with colds and it helps adults as well.
- **Nasal saline:** mix ½ tsp salt with 2/3 C water and a pinch of baking soda. Use 1 mL (one dropperful) of this in each nostril three times a day and up to every hour or two if needed. *J Fam Pract* 2002; 51:1049-1055



One favorite remedy to speed the course of an upper respiratory infection is a mushroom blend including Maitake, Reishi, Shiitake or other medicinal mushrooms, which stimulate the immune system. For acute infection, we recommend 4x the usual recommended preventive dose.

**What doesn't work:** **Antibiotics** won't help your cold (they are effective against bacteria, not viruses), and taking them for colds may cause resistance to develop so they won't work when you actually need them. Over-the-counter cold medicines are not particularly useful. Antihistamines make no difference in the course of a cold compared to placebo (sugar pill.) Decongestants can help some symptoms but can also elevate blood pressure and cause circulatory problems.

**When to call the doctor:** We need to see you if you develop chest pain or shortness of breath, if fevers persist more than 3-4 days, or if you are not improving after 2 weeks of illness.