

Simple remedies can prevent, lessen severity of common cold

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

While the common cold may be incurable, inconvenient and at times incapacitating, simple home remedies may offer relief to those stuck with the sniffles this winter.

A simple approach to combating a cold is to stimulate the immune system. According to Paul Ratté, ND, associate clinic faculty at Northwestern Health Sciences University in Bloomington, Minn., and Mark McKenzie, LAc, MaOM, dean of the Minnesota College of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, steps can be taken to stimulate the immune system, thereby lessening the duration and severity of cold symptoms.

Ratté and McKenzie offer the following tips to ensure optimum immune system function:

—Avoid excessive consumption of pro-inflammatory fats, such as red meat and dairy products;

—Avoid excessive alcohol intake, which debilitates the detoxification system and limits immune response;

—Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Wash your hands often to help protect yourself from germs. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth;

—Keep your neck and chest protected from wind, drafts and cold;

—Get an acupuncture treatment to boost your immune system;

—Relax and sleep enough. Your immune system is susceptible to stress. Use any stress-reduction methods (like yoga, massage or meditation) to avoid feeling overwhelmed;

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—Avoid excessive sugar consumption, which results in a 50-percent reduction of immune activity for one to five hours after consumption;

—Ensure you are consuming enough nutrients—specifically zinc, selenium, vitamin E, vitamin C and vitamin A.

While taking these steps may help support a healthy immune response, there are times when getting sick cannot be avoided. According to Ratté, nutritional and herbal supplements may be used to support a healthy immune response. “Taking echinacea at the first signs of illness may help decrease the duration of the cold,” says Ratté. This herbal supplement has a stimulating effect on the immune system. It is also a non-toxic and safe alternative to medication.

Ratté also recommends goldenseal. “This herb contains berberine, an alkaloid that demonstrates significant antimicrobial activity against a wide range of organisms,” he says. Not to be taken during pregnancy, goldenseal also holds immunity stimulating properties, and may be taken throughout the persistence of symptoms.

Astragalus, a traditional Chinese herb, can be used as a way to strengthen the body’s ability to resist to disease. According to Ratté, this supplement has been shown to reduce the frequency and duration of the common cold. In addition to herbal supplements, Ratté also recommends that common cold sufferers utilize various nutritional supports such as vitamin C, vitamin A, zinc, beta-glucan, thymus and colostrum.

“However, it is important that patients understand the quality of nutritional supplements,” says Ratté. “While people may opt for a lower-price version of herbal and nutritional supplements, price is greatly dependent upon quality of product. I suggest that people purchase remedies at the clinics of health care practitioners who can assure the highest quality product available, full disclosure labeling, and the use of hypoallergenic labeling.”

For additional resources, visit <http://www.nwhealth.edu/nns>, a Web site focusing on natural approaches to health and wellness hosted by Northwestern Health Sciences University.