

Boost Your Immunity



Coming down with a cold or sore throat?
Fortify yourself with nature's solutions

By Nicole Dorsey, MS

This year, doctors, hospitals and parents will diagnose one billion upper respiratory tract infections and colds in the U.S. Chances are, 10 to 20 percent of the population may also get the flu, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is vital that your immune system functions efficiently so you can fight off infections and harmful bacteria.

"When it comes to battling cold and flu, you may find certain plants and healing herbs crop up quite a bit [in herbal formulations] including ginger and echinacea," says Dr. Mark Moyad, MD, MPH, director of complementary and alternative medicine at the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor and co-author of *The Supplement Handbook* (Rodale).

"There's good reason why ginger and organic honey taken together really ease inflammation in the throat and lubricate your breathing passages," says Dr. John Young, physician and medical director of The Young Foundational Health Center, in Seminole, FL. Organic honey is a natural antimicrobial known to fight off infections, he says, and a daily dose also has antibacterial properties and may help you heal quicker and reduce the severity of symptoms.

Here are a few more natural remedies to try.

Probiotics Your digestive tract plays a major role in immune function, not only during cold and flu season but all year long. Studies suggest that your immune system's ability to develop or even correct these intolerances depends on the balance of good bacteria inside your intestinal tract. Drinking a probiotic (kefir or kombucha) or taking a supplement can help keep you healthy.

Green tea "Green tea packs among the highest concentration of powerful antioxidants, called polyphenols, which neutralize harmful free radicals that damage healthy cells and affect your immunity to colds and flu," says Dr. Young.

Tea tree and eucalyptus oils "Gargle regularly with salt water to keep respiratory passages moist, decongested and free of invading germs," says Dr. Moyad. To that end, he suggests adding tea tree oils or eucalyptus oils packed with anti-viral properties into decongesting steam baths.

Vitamins and Minerals Experts also agree that supplements containing sensible blends of vitamins like C, D, A, E, B2 zinc, selenium, manganese, magnesium, and the amino acids glutamine and lysine may help decrease severity of cold symptoms

and lessen the duration of drippy noses and congestion.

"Supplement enough vitamin D to make a difference [to your respiratory and digestive systems] including your immune defenses," says Dr. Young, an internist. "D helps fight bacterial and viral infections, including the flu. If I'm coming down with a cold, I'll take 40,000 units of vitamin D at bedtime," he says. "The next morning, I feel like a new person."

What to Buy

Some of our go-to natural remedies for the winter cold season.

- ▶ **GAIA HERBS ECHINACEA SUPREME** supports the lymphatic system, and kickstarts your immune response. gaiaherbs.com/products
- ▶ **NORDIC NATURALS VEGAN VITAMIN D3 VEGAN** and **ULTIMATE OMEGA** supplements in plant-based liquid formulas are easily absorbed and utilized. nordicnaturals.com
- ▶ **MEGAFOOD ACUTE DEFENSE TO GO!** An immune-strengthening formula in a portable powdered formulation, with echinacea and andrographis, known to rev up the body's immune defenses, plus whole elderberries, to help the body combat cold and flu viruses, with vitamin C and zinc. megafood.com
- ▶ **NATROL IMMUNE BOOST** Features vitamins C and D, along with other immune-boosting herbals to help power your immune defenses. natrol.com
- ▶ **NATURE'S WAY UMCKA COLDCARE** A homeopathic that works in tandem with the body's natural defenses to relieve symptoms and help you get better faster. naturesway.com
- ▶ **TRADITIONAL MEDICINALS THROAT COAT** This USDA-certified organic tea is made with slippery elm bark, licorice and marshmallow extract to soothe and comfort a sore throat. traditionalmedicinals.com
- ▶ **URBAN MOONSHINE IMMUNE ZOOM** Known for their amazing bitters, Urban Moonshine just launched a trio of herbal remedies, including Immune Zoom with echinacea, elderberries, cayenne and raw organic honey. urbanmoonshine.com
- ▶ **AMERICAN HEALTH ACEROLA PLUS** is a chewable (and delicious!) vitamin C tablet with acerola berry, citrus bioflavonoids and rose hip to provide immune and antioxidant support. americanhealthus.com
- ▶ **SOURCE NATURALS WELLNESS FORMULA** Loaded with vitamins C and D, zinc and selenium, as well as andrographis, echinacea and elderberry to support the immune system. sourcenaturals.com —Sara Jones