



ALASKA CENTER FOR ACUPUNCTURE

Preventing Colds and Flu Naturally with Common sense and Chinese wisdom

In the Chinese medical system, the back of the neck is an especially vulnerable part of the human body during cold, windy seasons. So the first line of defense against colds is to wear a good scarf or neck warmer when it's cold and windy outside. When the wind whips up, make sure your neck and lower back are not exposed, even for a short time.

Another reason people may get more colds in the winter is from being around other sick people. We tend to spend more time indoors and less time outside breathing fresh air. If there's a cold going around your office or household, wash your hands frequently and/or use alcohol hand sanitizer.

Sleep is a challenge in winter, especially during the holiday/travel season. Take the cues from outside – when there's less light out, your body needs more sleep. Try your best to get to bed earlier and sleep a little later if possible. Listen to what your body is telling you and don't try to push yourself to exhaustion with coffee or other stimulants.

By artificially pushing into your reserves, you're actually borrowing from tomorrow's energy and depleting yourself further. Pretty soon there are no reserves left when your body needs it to fight off an illness. A healthy, strong and well rested person is a much better match for a virus than an exhausted, stressed-out person. Your immune system is only as healthy as you are.

It's still important to get regular exercise, but this time of year it's better not to go all out. Do not exercise to the point of total fatigue in the late fall and winter. This time of year is about storing energy instead of spending it. Instead of using 100% - go for 80% and still have some energy left in your body at the end of the day. At the very least you should consider alternating vigorous workouts with more gentle restorative activities like casual walks, stretching and yoga.

What you eat this time of year is also important. Leave out the sugar, processed foods and artificial sweeteners. Eat more whole foods –especially root vegetables. Avoid cold drinks and opt for warm herbal teas instead. Instead of salad, have soup. Warming spices such as cinnamon, ginger and garlic are also great to add to your food this time of year too. **A great winter drink is some grated fresh ginger, a squeeze of lemon and a little raw honey or organic maple syrup mixed with hot water.**

Even with the best efforts, sometimes, you may get sick anyway. Don't get discouraged! Sometimes colds are actually your body's way of doing a little house cleaning, and in some cases, forcing you to get the rest you need in the winter.

At the first sign of a cold or flu, give us a call. Often Acupuncture and Chinese herbs can help your body to completely kick out a cold or help it move through faster. And acupuncture can prevent colds from moving into the lungs – which is important for people who already have breathing issues such as allergies or asthma. For people who tend to get frequent colds, regular treatment during this time of year can be extremely beneficial. Many of our clients report that they get sick a lot less often than they did before starting treatment.

Unlike over-the-counter medications which merely mask the symptoms of an illness, Chinese herbs and acupuncture actually help your body to rid itself of the cold. And Chinese Herbs won't cause drowsiness, dry mouth, irritability or any other side effects common to over-the-counter drugs.

Depending on the type, severity and location of cold and symptoms you are experiencing, we will diagnose the suitable herbal formula for you. Some herbs are appropriate to take for prevention, while some are best taken at the onset of symptoms.

Tips for Cold and Flu

What follows are some other home remedies and prevention tips in case you can't get in right away for Acupuncture treatment. We're offering many options because everyone's body is different and every remedy will not work the same for every person. However, if you are persistent and like to experiment, you will likely find the combination of remedies that is most helpful for you – and you will be ready the next time a cold or flu comes around.

****NOTE: Always call your doctor if your symptoms are severe – such as high fever, profuse sweating, vomiting, diarrhea or coughing up yellow or green phlegm.**

1. **Ginger/Scallion Tea** – chop fresh ginger and scallions and cook in a quart of water for about 20 minutes. Strain out the ginger and scallions and drink as fast as possible. Wrap up in blankets and sweat! Sweating throws open your body's pores and sends pathogens out to the surface.

2. **Garlic** – Garlic is a powerful antibacterial, antiviral and anti-fungal. So eat more garlic, especially in the winter. To learn more, visit:
http://www.mercola.com/2004/feb/28/garlic_health.htm

3. **Grapefruit Seed Extract** – Grapefruit Seed extract has strong anti-viral and antibiotic activity in very small amounts. You can gargle with a 1 or 2 drops in warm salt water (use sea salt if possible) at the first sign of a sore throat.

For nasal/sinus conditions you can add a small drop to the Neti pot (see entry below) OR add a couple of drops to a pot of boiling water, put a towel over your head so that it partially covers the pot as well and inhale the steam vapors for 5-10 minutes. Take breaks if it's too hot, and be careful not to burn yourself. To learn more visit:

<http://www.sourcenaturals.com/products/GP1144.html>

http://www.wholehealthmd.com/refshelf/substances_view/1,1525,985,00.html

4. **Neti Pot/Nasal Wash** – keeps the sinus membranes clear and healthy. Learn more at: <http://www.bytheplanet.com/Products/Yoga/neti/Netipot.htm> or do a Google search for “Neti Pot”

5. **Sambucol** – a product based on elderberry extract that can shorten the duration and lessen symptoms of cold and flu. Several variations of this formula are available in the Mat-Su Valley. Check Ideal Nutrition in Palmer, All About Herbs in Wasilla, and Fred Meyer and Carrs usually carry this in the health food section. Learn more at:

<http://www.sambucol.com/>

6. **Hydrogen Peroxide** – you can put this in your ears at the first sign of a cold or flu – read this article to learn more:

http://www.mercola.com/2002/mar/13/hydrogen_peroxide.htm#

7. **Black Seed or Black Cumin** – a powerful herb that is a strong antioxidant and supports the immune system. It is available in many forms. We like black seed oil and ground black seed mixed with ground flax seed in the morning as an overall immune tonic. Check out this link to learn more:

<http://www.sweetsunnah.com/>

8. Have a conversation with an herbalist **BEFORE** you get sick. That way you can have some herbs on hand at the first sign of a cold or flu. Call Local Herbalist **Stella Lyn** – owner of **Red Moon Rising** in Palmer - for an herbal or nutritional consultation at 746 - 1353. Here is a recipe for Stella's favorite cold and flu remedy, **Garlic Honey**:

Garlic Honey – fill a jar with unpeeled garlic cloves and cover it with honey (use the best quality honey you can find). The honey will liquefy in 24 hours or so. Strain out the garlic and put the liquid in the fridge. Take the honey by the spoonful at the first sign of cold or flu. Kids will actually eat this! If you want to leave the garlic in the honey, that's OK, but make sure the honey is still covering it or it will get moldy. A variation is **Onion Honey**. Follow the same instructions as above. **Onion Honey** is great for coughs.

9. Other local options for information on herbal remedies for colds and flu:

Ideal Nutrition in Palmer (in the Koslosky Center) – owner Karen Hurst 745-8487

All About Herbs in Wasilla – owner Dori Cranmore, R.N. 376-8327

10. **Considering a flu shot?** Think twice before you do and read this article first:

http://www.mercola.com/2000/nov/26/flu_shots.htm#

11. **Feed your soul!** A healthy immune system starts with a healthy body, mind and spirit. Devote some time every day to doing something you love and share that love with other people.

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