

Preventing Winter Colds and the Flu

by *Barbara Mendez*



The most frequently asked question I get from clients is what my thoughts are about the flu shot. Even strangers at parties, once they find out what I do, ask me what I think of the flu shot. It's like a big mystery. Apparently there is a lot of fear about not getting one because of all the dramatic news coverage geared towards the perilous consequences of the flu yet there is also some obvious doubt whether it is really necessary to put a toxin in your body that may or may not protect you from this year's flu strain. So here are my thoughts on this: I generally do not

believe in the flu shot. Now of course, there are some extenuating circumstances where a flu shot may be necessary, such as in people with compromised immune systems, or the elderly, but even then, if under the right care and armed with the proper nutrients to keep you healthy, I think the flu shot can be dispensed with.

Every year scientists at drug companies come up with this year's flu shot based on at least 10,000 previous flu strains that have in the past affected us. What it fails to deliver is the flu strain that will

prevail this season, basically rendering it useless. In regards to the effectiveness of the flu vaccine over a period of time, research published February 2005 in JAMB (Journal of the American Medical Association) found that although the number of patients receiving flu shots has increased from 17% in 1980 to 65% in 2001, deaths from the flu also increased during this time period.

So what do you do to protect yourself from the flu? There are many things that you can begin to incorporate into your life in order to boost your immunity as well as enhance well-being. Exercise is a big one. People who exercise have stronger immune systems, are less prone to stress and live longer than their sedentary counterparts. In fact a recent research study showed that those who engaged in high levels of physical activity lived 3 ½ years longer overall and had 3.2 years longer free of heart disease. These are very promising results.

In addition to exercise it is important of course to feed yourself in a healthy, life enhancing way by getting in plenty of vegetables, some fresh fruit in season, nuts, seeds and beans as well as lean quality protein. Try to avoid refined foods and sugars, packaged foods and limit consumption of dairy products. Dairy promotes mucous production and can give rise to many respiratory tract infections.

As far as supplements are concerned, there are a few that I consider necessary during cold and flu season. The following is an outline of each; their benefits and the best way to use them:

VITAMIN CABINET

Oscilliococcinum: This homeopathic

remedy with the tongue twister name is one of the best remedies to keep on hand during the flu season. Made by Boiron, a respected name in homeopathic medicines, Oscilliococcinum has saved me and many of my clients from the onslaught of a full blown flu. Formulated in tiny pellets that you dissolve under the tongue, Oscillo is thought to stimulate your body's own defenses. It works best at the onset of symptoms, when your body has more resources to react. In recent clinical studies, 63% of patients treated with Oscilliococcinum showed clear improvement in 48 hours.

Order a twelve pack of Oscillo and keep some in your home, desk, purse or car so that at the very first sign of symptoms such as achiness, chills or general feeling of malaise, you can simply pop a tube and stop the flu from progressing. Once the flu has taken hold within your body, it no longer works so you have to take it as soon as you suspect you may be developing flu like symptoms. This safe and effective formula is available in health food stores and pharmacies.

Olive Leaf Extract: Olive leaf is an herbal supplement that has amazing antiviral and antibacterial properties helping to prevent or curb the length of time an illness brings you down. Laboratory tests show that Olive Leaf interferes with a virus's ability to establish itself within the body, as well as inhibiting their ability to reproduce. I keep a regular supply of Olivir, a high potency Olive Leaf extract by Davinci Labs in my apartment throughout the winter so that at the first sign of a sore throat or even a bit of congestion, I take a few days of this

wonderful herb, thwarting potential bacterial infections that would otherwise put me out of commission for a week. Another possible way to use Olive Leaf, especially for those with a weakened immunity and a high potential for illness, is to take two tablets, four days a week for a total of 8 tablets weekly to help boost immune function. Olivir is available in many health foods stores.

Kold Kare: *Andrographis paniculata*, an herb used extensively in China and India as a natural defense against bacterial and viral infections is the active ingredient in KOLD KARE. Made by Kare ~N ~ Herbs, Kold Kare has proven to be an effective prophylactic against the common cold, flu and sinusitis. In addition, Kold Kare helps to hasten

recovery time and shorten the duration of colds and the flu, helping you get back to your life. *Andrographis paniculata*, the active ingredient of Kold Kare has bacteriostatic and virostatic properties, reducing tiredness by 30%, shivering by 50%, sore throat by 40%, muscular ache by 48%, and sinus pain and headache by 30% in comparison to control groups who took placebos according to the studies put together by Kare ~ N ~ Herbs. Also available in most health food stores.

Barbara Mendez is a registered pharmacist and nutritional consultant in private practice in New York City. She is also the in-house nutritionist for the Harvard Club. For more information on Barbara, please go to her website at www.lifestylenutrients.net Barbara is available for corporate lectures.