

Cold & Flu Support



CCNM
Canadian College of
Naturopathic Medicine

Integrative
Cancer
Centre

If you come down with the common cold or mild flu, these simple supports can help reduce the severity and duration of your symptoms. However, consult a healthcare provider if you have: fever higher than 39°C (38°C if you are undergoing chemotherapy), unexplained skin rash, change in consciousness, weight change or if your symptoms do not improve after 10 days.

Dietary Support

- Aim to eat highly nutritious, easily digested, simple foods and avoid mucus-forming foods such as red meat and dairy products
- Increase fluid intake - not only water but other nutritious liquids such as bone or chicken broth, vegetable juices and herbal teas
- Add natural antibiotic foods such as garlic, onion and ginger to your foods
- Add warming spices such as ginger, turmeric, cinnamon, chili, pepper, rosemary and thyme
- Teas can help with hydration, symptom control as well as provide some antimicrobial activity:
 - Elderberry – has antiviral & immune supportive activity, tastes delicious
 - Elderflower – is a natural decongestant and promotes sweating
 - Echinacea tea – helps stimulate immune activity and has antiviral action as well
 - Throat Coat® tea by Traditional Medicinals helps soothe sore throats
 - Breathe Easy® by Traditional Medicinals helps relieve sinus and chest congestion

Helpful Recipes

- Flu-fighting tea:
 - 1 inch fresh ginger root, thinly sliced
 - 3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
 - 2 tablespoons raw honey
 - 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon, ½ teaspoon ground turmeric, and a pinch of cayenne pepper, or to taste
 - Instructions: Add all ingredients to 3 cups of water in a small saucepan. Stir until the honey is dissolved and bring mixture to a boil over medium high heat. Reduce heat to low and let mixture simmer for at least 30 minutes. Strain into a mug and enjoy warm or cold.
- Bone broth, which contains anti-inflammatory amino acids and is packed full of immune supporting vitamins and minerals:
 - Ingredients (4 servings):
 - 2 pounds of chicken bones
 - 1 carrot, chopped
 - 1 medium onion, diced
 - 2 stalks of celery, chopped
 - 1 head garlic, halved
 - 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
 - 1 teaspoon sea salt
 - 1 cup parsley, roughly chopped
 - 6 cups filtered water, or enough to cover all the bones
 - Place the bones in a slow cooker and add all remaining ingredients. Set slow cooker to low and let cook for at least 12 hours.
 - After 12 hours, strain the broth through a fine strainer or mesh sack. Discard the vegetables. Allow broth to cool. Once cool, remove the layer of fat that forms on the top and discard. This broth can be frozen up to 6 months and thawed when needed.

Home Remedies

- Warming Socks are a natural method of stimulating the immune system to help fight an infection and also help lessen congestion. Start when you first feel the symptoms of a cold coming on and continue each night for as long as necessary.
 - Supplies needed:
 - 1 pair of thin cotton socks
 - 1 pair of thick wool socks
 - Instructions:
 - Before you go to bed, warm your feet in hot water for at least 3 minutes
 - Wet the cotton socks in very cold water, as cold as you can handle, and wring the socks out well. Put on the cold wet cotton socks immediately after the hot footbath.
 - Put the dry thick wool socks on over the wet cold cotton socks and go to bed.
 - Leave the socks on until they are dry, it usually takes until morning.
 - How does it work? This treatment acts to reflexively increase circulation and decrease congestion in the upper respiratory passages, head and throat. It also has a sedating action, and many report better sleep during the treatment. It can also relieve pain and increase the healing response during acute infection.
- Neti Pots/Nasal saline irrigation (available at drug stores, health food stores, and online) can be used to rinse debris and mucus from the nose, which can help to relieve nasal and sinus congestion.
 - Supplies: one neti pot filled with distilled, sterile, or boiled and cooled tap water plus a ½ - 1 teaspoon of salt, or a combination of salt and baking soda, dissolved in the water.
 - Instructions:
 - Tilt head sideways over a sink and place the spout of the pot in the upper nostril
 - Breathing through your open mouth, gently pour the saltwater solution into your upper nostril so that the liquid drains through the lower nostril. Repeat on the other side.
 - Rinse the neti pot after each use with distilled, sterile, previously boiled and cooled, or filtered water and leave open to air-dry.
- Steam inhalation can help reduce cold symptoms and lessen nasal and sinus congestion.
 - Supplies: a large bowl of recently boiled water, a towel, optional 1-2 drops of essential oil (eucalyptus, tea tree, peppermint, or thyme)
 - Instructions:
 - Carefully pour the hot water into the bowl and drape the towel over the back of your head.
 - Lower your head toward the hot water until you're about 8 to 12 inches away from the water. Be extremely careful to avoid making direct contact with the water.
 - Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose for at least two to five minutes. Turn on a timer and close your eyes.
 - Don't steam longer than 10 to 15 minutes for each session. However, you can repeat steam inhalation two or three times per day, as needed, if you're still having symptoms.

Supplements

- Vitamin C has been studied and shown to help reduce the duration of colds, when given at higher doses, up to bowel tolerance.
 - At the first sign of a cold take 1000 mg of vitamin C every 2 waking hours for 48 hours and then decrease your dose to 1000 mg 3 times per day until you are feeling better. If you begin to experiencing any loose stools, nausea, or upset stomach then you have reached bowel tolerance and should not take any more vitamin C that day. Repeat the next day, but decrease your dose by 1000 mg.
- Zinc gluconate lozenges have been studied and shown to reduce the severity and/or duration of cold symptoms. Look for one that contains 5-10 mg per lozenge. At the first sign of a cold take 1 lozenge every 2 waking hours for the first 2 days and then decrease your dose to 3 times per day until you are feeling better.
- Echinacea-based herbal throat spray can be a good option to provide some local antimicrobial action as well as analgesic effect to help relieve a sore throat.