

OUR TOP 10 REMEDIES FOR COLD & FLU SEASON BY MARY JO KURTZ

After the stress of the holidays our bodies are run down and it's no wonder that colds and the flu run rampant! Our resistance is low from lack of sleep, stress and, of course, a diet of less than nutritious foods that tend to be typical holiday fare. So, when germs come our way, there's a good chance we may not feel our best. We thought we'd share some of our top picks for these occasions.

1. LEMONS

One trick we use at the first sign of a sore or scratchy throat is to chop up half a lemon and put it in the blender with a small amount of water— skin and all! Blend and drink the whole thing. If that's too strong use just the juice. You can also enjoy sipping hot or warm water with fresh lemon juice and some organic raw honey. For even more relief you can add fresh ginger. This is helpful for cough relief but remember ginger is spicy. So for sore throats you may want to skip the ginger.

2. GARLIC

We love garlic and cook with it in almost everything! But when garlic cloves are eaten raw they have anti-viral, antibacterial, and immune boosting benefits. At the first sign of a cold, mash or chop a clove and either swallow it or add it to some food just before eating. Cooking can destroy some of the benefits but adding more garlic to your cooking will still provide some of the same effects.

3. PROBIOTICS

These supplements can help boost immunity by supplying large supplies of healthy bacteria to the intestinal tract. Since nearly 400 different types of bacteria normally live in the intestinal tract, maintaining a balance of “good” and “bad” bacteria is important to your health. When this balance is upset, your health can be compromised. To help alleviate that, probiotic supplements can be very helpful. They come as tablets, capsules, powders, and refrigerated liquids. You can also get probiotics from eating yogurt, acidophilus milk and kefir (make sure they are labeled that they contain L-acidophilus). Remember, whenever you take antibiotics they kill off the “good” bacteria and this causes an imbalance. In that case, probiotics are a must!

4. NETI POT

This is an all-time favorite of mine! Used to flush the nasal passages with a salt water rinse, this simple technique can relieve sinus congestion and other symptoms more than saline sprays and many other medications. It will clear the nostrils for easier breathing, remove excess mucous, reduce allergens in the passages, and relieve nasal dryness. Don't be intimidated by this practice. Once you have felt the effects you may consider making this a daily habit. You can purchase a neti pot online or at your health food store. When you get brave you can try adding other antiviral and antibacterial oils or powders to your warm water. This is a must for anyone suffering from nasal congestion, allergies, etc.

5. SUPPLEMENTS

There are a myriad of supplements available to help fight colds and flu, however my top two favorites are Chinese Goldenseal Root and Olive Leaf Extract. Golden Seal Root is considered one of nature's greatest antibiotics. It is extremely beneficial in relieving congestion and fighting infection. It is also beneficial to the liver, gall bladder, circulation, veins and pancreas.

Olive Leaf Extract is from the leaves of the Mediterranean olive tree. It is an excellent antimicrobial and antibiotic. In addition to helping fight colds and flu it has been reported to aid with various types of infections and chronic conditions such as chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, and rheumatoid arthritis. The most important factor for me when choosing a brand is good quality. Both are always on hand in my house.

6. ESSENTIAL OILS

Therapeutic grade essential oils can benefit your respiratory system and your entire body by supporting your body's natural defense system. Unlike antibiotics, they do not kill off the beneficial bacteria in the intestines. They also don't make you drowsy or present a problem to the kidneys or liver by putting harsh chemicals in the blood stream. Oils can be applied directly to the body, often with a carrier oil or can be taken internally in very small amounts. They can also be diffused in the air (breaking up into a fine mist) to aid the respiratory system. My favorites for chest congestion are eucalyptus and lavender oil mixed with a carrier oil such as grapeseed, jojoba, or olive.

7. WHOLE FOODS DIET

When we are feeling under the weather a light and simple diet of whole fresh foods is best. The body needs as much energy as possible to fight all that is going on inside and if it has to utilize energy digesting heavy foods there is less energy for healing. So, go with a limited diet and focus on incorporating as many of the healing foods as possible. A delicious bowl of homemade chicken soup is still a great idea!

8. SLEEP

Never underestimate the importance of a good night's sleep. When you're under the weather this is not the time to try to accomplish everything on your to-do list. Give your body every advantage to conserve energy and use it to heal yourself. In the long run – your down time will be shortened.

9. EXERCISE

As a preventative measure keep up your exercise routine even in the winter! Physically active people are reported to catch fewer colds and respiratory infections.

10. WASH YOUR HANDS

Of course we've all heard this before – but today this can't be stated too often.

Recent studies even report that there is greater risk of passing infection from shaking hands than from sharing a kiss! So, make sure you use soap, warm water and wash for 30 seconds!