

Tis the Season: Cold and Flu Season

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It was surprising to return to colder temperatures here in Oregon than I experienced during some severe weather and a power outage in Michigan last month. The cold snap has caught some people unaware before we're used to bundling up and I'm seeing an upswing on sniffles, sneezes, coughs and wheezes. Yes, it's cold and flu season again. The good news about cold and flu season is that there are effective, fast acting treatments available to get you back on your feet if you do get hit with a bug this season.

First thing to note if you start feeling under the weather is that if you already have an appointment at our clinic, we welcome you to keep it! Come in to the clinic to be evaluated to ensure you don't have anything more serious going on, get a plan for how to address your symptoms and maybe get some relief with a direct treatment that day. Acupuncture and cupping can give relief the same day.

Next, remember that what you eat influences your health every single day and can be a strong treatment strategy when under the weather. Sugar feeds viruses and bacteria, so cut that out when sick. Avoid the saltine and ginger ale diet and instead, eat simply and get plenty of warm liquids in the form of broth, soup, congee and hot tea. (Recipes are available on our website.) Garlic straddles the road between food and herb, but if you tolerate this wonder bulb, use liberally!

Botanical medicines (herbs) are a great treatment for upper respiratory infections, especially if started early on. If you're one of those people who knows that slight scratch at the back of your throat always signals a cold coming on, you might be able to knock it out early. Herbs like goldenseal, Oregon grape, Echinacea, usnea and elderberry act through a variety of means, both enhancing our body's immune reaction and by directly acting on virus, bacteria and fungus. Used appropriately, through immune modulation, herbs may actually enhance your body's ability to recognize and fight infection with the same or similar infectious agents in future. Treatment with herbal medicines generally results in less gastrointestinal upset than treating with prescription antibiotics because they do not cause such a strong swing in the flora of the digestive tract.

"Cold or Flu. Antibiotics Don't Work for You." refers to the fact that common cold and flu are viral infections and as such are not address by antibiotics, which are indicated only for bacterial infections. While many patients come in thinking they just want to get an antibiotic prescription, it often isn't the appropriate treatment strategy and may cause both short and long term problems. In the short term, antibiotics have the unintended side effect of killing friendly bacteria that live in our guts – this is what causes antibiotic induced diarrhea in some cases. This has more importance than a temporary change in your bowel habits, though, as these flora are an essential part of our digestive process, immune system and barrier functions. In the long term,

misuse of antibiotics, especially when a course of antibiotics is not completed through the entire prescription, can lead to antibiotic resistance, bacteria that do not die when treated with conventional antibiotics. Because naturopathic physicians have other treatment options, we'll often prescribe other treatments before using antibiotics, but when needed because a bacterial infection has developed, we use these powerful tools as well.

Prevention

Like saving 15% on car insurance, we all know that prevention is better than a cure, but what can you do to prevent getting a cold? Not surprisingly, a lot of the same things you do to treat one. Make sure to get plenty of sleep, eat right and drink lots of water. Wash your hands thoroughly and often. Bundle up, covering your neck and head to keep warm. And if you tend towards a season of cold symptoms, supplement your good diet with immune modulating herbs.

At our clinic, these are just a few of the tools we utilize to address symptoms of cold and flu season. We also offer acupuncture, moxibustion, cupping, IV therapy, guidance on home hydrotherapy and chiropractic adjustments to help speed healing, enhance immunity and get you back on your feet doing the things



you love. If you'd like help preventing a cold or treating your symptoms, all of our physicians are accepting new patients. Call 503-691-0901 to schedule an appointment.

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