

Prevention During Cold and Flu Season

BY *BIJANA KADAKIA, ND, TRUE HEALTH MEDICINE PC*

At our clinic, cold and flu season doesn't coincide with the change in the weather as much as with the return of children to school. We've already been seeing patients come in with head colds, lingering coughs and even a case of pneumonia. Much of the advice that we give for treating these symptoms can also be used to help keep you healthy and prevent becoming ill with common viral infections. In this article, I'll provide you with a some guidelines for a lifestyle that boosts immunity as well as some idea about the kinds of things we might have to offer should you need more specific recommendations or actual treatment.

First, let's make it simple:

- Drink enough water
- Avoid sugar
- Eat your veggies
- Exercise moderately
- Consider supplements

That's a prevention plan in a nutshell. Most of these guidelines are important for more than one reason or for reasons that are sometimes not clear. For example, there are several theories about how exercise enhances immunity, but the jury is still out. What is clear, though, is that people with these behaviors do seem to suffer less illness than those who do not.

Drink enough water: There are lots of guides on how much water to drink follow your thirst, 8 glasses, half your body weight. How much you should drink depends on a number of factors, but I cannot overstate how much better my patients feel when they are properly hydrated. Staying hydrated is also important to keep any mucus secretions thin and to flush our body.

Avoid sugar: My patients know that a high vegetable diet is usually my number one rule, but that changes when I'm talking about preventing or treating infections. Then the role of sugar becomes the highest priority. Not only can sugar feed infectious agents, but it also directly suppresses the immune system. This immunosuppressive effect lasts for hours after consuming sugar, so one sweet treat while fighting an illness isn't as harmless as you might think.

Keep in mind that 4 grams of sugar is equivalent to 1 teaspoon. Given that simple conversion, you can usually figure out how many teaspoons or tablespoons are in a food item and make an informed decision. Better yet, consume

mostly whole foods like whole grains, nuts, seeds, beans, legumes, fruits and vegetables and you have less to worry about when it comes to sugars.

Eat your veggies: After the sugar is out, then resume working on increasing those veggies! Vegetables are high nutrient density foods meaning they have more nutrition per calorie than other foods. These nutrients, including vitamins, minerals and bioflavonoids are essential in all body functions including immune health. They also are a rich source of dietary fiber, which helps with elimination and detoxification of the body.

Exercise moderately: Our bodies were not meant to be seated at a computer all day. Find some form of movement you love and practice it regularly, walk 30 minutes a day, walk 10,000 steps per day. Increase your activity in little ways by parking further away and taking the stairs. All these little choices add up and help keep our bones, heart and immune system healthy.

Consider supplements: Even with a vegetable-rich diet, some nutrients may be useful to supplement. Supplement suggestions and dosing should be individualized, but some nutrients to consider supplementing are vitamin C and vitamin D. Our bodies cannot manufacture vitamin C, so it must be consumed in the diet or supplements. It is also water soluble, meaning the body does not store it well, so supplementing can be very helpful. Vitamin D, on the other hand, is fat soluble and stored in the body, but we're finding that many people have low Vitamin D levels. I recommend testing Vitamin D at least twice yearly and supplementing to maintain optimal levels.

If you've got these great habits down and still get sick or suffer recurrent illnesses through the season, consider coming in for an evaluation and personalized prevention plan. At our office, we support your immune system and help you feel better using many tools including herbal medicines and nutritional supplements, home hydrotherapy, IV nutrient therapy, acupuncture and yes, prescription antibiotics when needed. Our goal is your true health, so that you can meet your goals!



Bijana Devo Kadakia is a naturopathic physician and licensed acupuncturist with True Health Medicine, PC, a group practice of naturopathic physicians and acupuncturists. The clinic is located at 8555 SW Tualatin Road, Tualatin, OR. 503-691-0901.