

Colds and Influenza

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We are exposed to many viruses at all times so it would seem that we catch colds when the body's resistance is low. Maintaining a good resistance and general well being is probably the best course, being that prevention is better than cure. It should be pointed out here that because colds are caused by viruses, antibiotics are virtually useless except for the fact that they may help inhibit the development of bacterial infections.

Major symptoms include :

- Dry, sore throat.
- Nasal congestion.
- Sneezing.
- Slightly raised temperature.
- Swollen cervical lymph nodes.
- Watering Eyes.

We catch a cold when the conditions in our body allow it to thrive. Catching a cold happens because our body is not functioning to its best ability.

In most people a cold will last for up to 7 days. Using herbs and natural remedies can usually reduce this to 2 or 3 days, although symptoms may get worse before improving as the body's immune system is stimulated to fight off infection.

If catching a cold is something that you do regularly in the winter, then keeping a mucous free diet (See Mucous Diet in health Information Sheets) is a good beginning. Treating the cold herbally with such herbs as Elderflower (*Sambucus nigra*) Peppermint (*Mentha piperata*) and Yarrow (*Achillea millifolium*) works well in an infusion with honey and lemon.

General Therapeutics.

Liquids.

During a cold, the mucous membranes of the upper respiratory tract tend to get dry, this irritates them even more and also provides a better environment for viruses. Drinking fluids rehydrates the membranes as well as reducing the solute concentrate of the blood which enhances leucocyte function.

Sleep & Rest.

The body functions at its best when sleeping, relaxing or meditating. This is because it is at these times it is under the control of the parasympathetic nervous system. Quiet and rest are therefore very important when treating the common

cold.

Sugar.

Too much sugar acts to impair immune function, possibly by inhibiting uptake of Vitamin C into the leucocytes.

Sugar of all sources both natural and refined should be limited whilst suffering from a cold.

Treatments.

Cold Formula. - To be started as soon as first signs of the cold are apparent. *Achillea millefolium* (Yarrow), *Sambucus niger* (Elderflower) and *mentha piperita* (Peppermint). Equal parts in a hot infusion or tinctures in hot water, combines well with lemon, honey and root ginger.

Sore throat - Gargle with tinctures of *Salvia officinalis* (Sage), *Thymus vulgaris* (Thyme), and *Commiphora molle* (Myrrh). Take 5 - 10mls of diluted tincture mixture in warm water, gargle and then swallow .

Excessive mucous .- Use anti-catarrhals e.g. *hydrastis canadensis* (Goldenseal), *Solidago virgaurea* (Golden Rod), and steam inhalations such as *Eucalyptus* , Thyme, Sage and peppermint essential oils.

Swollen Lymph Glands.- Make an infusion with *Galium aparine*, allow to cool and drink at least 500mls of cold infusion per day.

Aching Bones.- *Eupatorium perfoliatum* (Boneset), and *Sambucus niger* (Elderflower), in an infusion or as tinctures.

Fever.- Use diaphoretics, (also see Influenza) e.g. *Achillea millefolium* (Yarrow), *Sambucus niger* (Elderflower), *Eupatorium perfoliatum* (Boneset) and *Nepeta cataria* (Catnip) as an infusion with dried

herbs or tinctures.

Immuno-stimulants.-*Echinacea* spp.(*Echinacea*) I prefer *angustifolia*, *Astragalus membranaceus*.

Supplements.- Vitamin C up to 2000mg or to bowel tolerance.

Zinc lozenges Up to 7 a day for a week. Or a chelated Zinc up to 30gm daily.

Vitamin A 700mcg or 2,300iu Daily.

Humidifier.-Humidifiers moisten the air and therefore the mucous membranes, which will assist breathing.

They can be purchased reasonably cheaply and with the addition of appropriate essential oils can be very beneficial. Bowls of boiling water can be used here but great care needs to be taken.

INFLUENZA.

Influenza is an acute viral respiratory infection which tends to occur more often in Winter. The influenza virus may cause epidemics of illness. New strains of viruses occur from time to time. An incubation period of 48 hours is best observed. Influenza generally presents with symptoms such as headache, fever, malaise, sore throat, cough and muscle aching.

Possible complications of influenza include pneumonia, bronchitis or encephalitis, which may occasionally be fatal in children, the elderly, people with chronic lung disease or heart valve problems. Influenza should be differentiated from the common cold, mononucleosis, strep.throat, bronchitis or viral pneumonia.

The treatment plan can follow that of the common cold with more attention to the high fever that usually presents. It needs careful monitoring to ensure that the disease does not progress to anything more serious. Enlisting the support of a Medical Doctor here may be appropriate.

Treatment Of fevers.

Temperature.

The normal body temperature is 37degrees C or 98.6 degrees F. This will fluctuate a little throughout the day, being half a degree or so lower in the morning and half a degree or so higher after exertion or in very hot climates.

Hypothermia.(lowered body temperature)

Rare, except in cases of exposure or severe malnutrition. Warming should be done conservatively and no fluids should be administered until the patient is fully conscious and breathing normally.

Fever or Pyrexia.

This is defined as a body temperature of at least one degree above the norm. If temperature rises above 40 degrees C or 104 degrees F, then there is danger of fits, convulsions or even brain damage may occur. Normally a temperature should not be artificially lowered but if approaching critical levels then measures may be taken to reduce it. These could include, cool sponging down of the body, one limb at a time, to avoid undue chilling, cool cloths on the forehead, ice cubes in the mouth and a small window open for ventilation. DO NOT WRAP UP. Do not use these methods unless the temperature is getting really high.

Types Of Fever.

- Acute.- A sudden sharp raise in temperature for a relatively short time (hours rather than days) caused by infections of common viruses e.g., chickenpox, influenza or measles. By an allergy infected injury etc. may be or an

- Chronic.- A sustained high temperature which may be caused by sepsis e.g. in appendicitis, a tooth

abscess, tonsillitis or TB, Liver Disease or Cancer.

- Remittent.- Wide fluctuations above the norm. May be caused by blood poisoning, sepsis, typhoid or malaria etc.

- Intermittent.- Repeated slightly raised temperature with periods of normality. This is characteristic of children during times of emotional or psychological stress. There are usually no other physical symptoms.

Fever of Unknown Origin.

This refers to an elevated temperature > 38.3 degrees C for longer than two weeks, when the primary cause has not been identified. It usually presents with loss of appetite, malaise and weight loss and lethargy.

In children 50 percent of cases are found to be due to viral or bacterial infections e.g. Endocarditis or infectious mononucleosis. 20 percent are due to collagen inflammations e.g. arthritis or inflammatory bowel disease. Cancers account for another 10 percent and 20 percent are due to miscellaneous causes that are never actually identified.

In adults collagen disease and cancer account for most cases while about 10 percent are never identified.

General Treatment Of Fevers.

General treatment of Fevers indicates a need for reduced food intake, avoidance of all heavy proteins (meat and dairy) as well as all refined carbohydrates and fried foods. Plenty of fluids are required and juice fasting may be beneficial.