

Swine Flu

Contributed by Administrator
Saturday, 15 August 2009

What is Swine Flu?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza virus. Swine flu viruses cause high levels of illness and low death rates in pigs. The classical swine flu virus (an influenza type A H1N1 virus) was first isolated from a pig in 1930. Swine flu viruses do not normally infect humans but when they do human to human transmission happens. This is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu occurs in people, which is mainly through coughing or sneezing of infected people. People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with swine flu also have reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. Of concern is the recent outbreak in Mexico that has killed over 100 people and how this mutated virus might affect people in Britain. The first deaths of Londoners who are young and in good health are now on record. If you are experiencing any symptoms of the swine flu (fatigue, cough, fever, etc.) then please contact the swine flu web site or phone line.

www.direct.gov.uk/Pandemicflu 0800 1 513 513

If symptoms persist however you should contact your GP immediately. There is no vaccine to protect humans from swine flu as yet but work is being done as we speak.

There are however antiviral medications available from the help line like Relenza or Tamiflu that should help to reduce the severity of swine flu infections if taken early enough.

In the meantime, you could take natural preventative treatments to strengthen your body's immune system to fight off flu related infections and slow down its spread.

If you decide on these preventative treatments please do not hesitate to contact me.

There are many herbs useful for influenza etc. Below are one or two, but consulting a Medical Herbalist is always best.

Echinacea:

For what is Echinacea used? - Cold & Flu Remedy:

As a broad-spectrum immune system stimulant Echinacea is most used to protect against, & to treat, common colds, flu, & sore throat. A natural antibiotic, echinacea is used to treat infections, to combat low resistance to sickness & to enhance the immune system.

Echinacea Safety

Echinacea is one of the safest of herbal remedies and is one of the most popular; it is prescribed in continental Europe millions of times a year! Long term use seems to be well tolerated & is not thought to be harmful. Echinacea should not be used during pregnancy or breast-feeding.

What's in Echinacea and how does it work?

The ability of Echinacea to stimulate the immune system is extremely well documented. The primary constituent responsible for its activity are large sugar molecules called polysaccharides. Two in particular have been identified as beneficial: inulin and arabinogalactin. These polysaccharides activate the immune system in many ways. Echinacea has

been shown to increase production of T cells, increase levels of circulating neutrophils, improve leukocyte phagocytosis, assist antibody binding and natural killer cell activity.

Echinacea also has direct antibacterial properties. In general, Echinacea has been thoroughly demonstrated to reduce the duration and severity of common cold and flu symptoms.

Echinacea is a herb that deserves its place in our medicine cabinet.

Elderberry & Elderflower:

Elder has anti-catarhal and anti-inflammatory properties.

Patients with flu were tested with either elderberry extract or a placebo. Within 24 hours, 20% of the elderberry showed dramatic improvements in fever, muscle pain, and respiratory symptoms. After the second day, 75% showed a marked change for the better and by the third day, 90% felt much better.

Of the placebo group, only 8% improved in the first 24 hours, 16% in 48 hours, and the rest required 6 days to feel better.

Elderberry is thought to strengthen the cell membrane so a virus cannot penetrate it.

Infusions of the flower are used for colds, sinusitis and feverish conditions; it is also used for hayfever.

An ointment can be made to use on chilblains, sprains and bruises. Fresh and dried flowers are used in skin toners, hand creams, and also used in many other cosmetics.

Always consult a Qualified Medical Herbalist.