

PREVENTING COLDS AND FLUS

Dr. Fran M. Pinault MS, LAc, ND

There has been much concern in the news lately about the shortage of the flu vaccine. Many people feel that the flu vaccine has helped them remain flu-free for years yet others feel the vaccine should be avoided at all cost. As standard of care, the flu vaccine should be considered for the elderly or very young, as their immune systems are not fully functional. The vaccine is also recommended for those with compromised immunity such as those who are receiving chemotherapies for cancer, or who have other diseases such as tuberculosis or AIDS. Most people do not die of the flu but there are thousands of people each year who die of flu-related illnesses. Prevention of these deaths warrant trying a flu shot although last year's flu vaccine was reported by the Center for Disease Control to have been only 30 percent effective. Some reasons to avoid the flu shot include thimersol, a preservative in many vaccines which contains mercury is toxic to the body; and one researcher has found a link between flu shots and development of Alzheimer's disease.

I have found that prevention is the most important factor when it comes to cold and flu development. This is achieved through hygiene and keeping your body, mind and spirit feeling vital. Here are some suggestions for keeping your body healthy so that you can enjoy the coming holidays.

Hygiene is a crucial when it comes to preventing transmission of viruses (which cause ALL flues) and bacteria. Be mindful to wash your hands throughout the day. We constantly pick up organisms when we shake hands, open doors, use gym equipment and other means of contact. Daily sinus washing with saline can flush out organisms that try to harbor our nasal passages and cause the common cold. Simply mix 1/2 teaspoon salt and baking soda in one quart distilled water to make saline. Snort the saline into each nostril tilting the head back to allow it to go back into the sinuses. Then blow the saline out into the sink. Repeat several times in each nostril.

Swabbing the ear with garlic oil each day after you shower kills organisms that try to settle into the middle ear and eventually cause sore throats. Crush three cloves of garlic and let it soak for two days in two ounces of olive oil. Store the oil in a jar with a tight lid. Using a Q-tip swab the ear each day with the oil. Also eat fresh garlic each day which has anti-viral and anti-bacterial action. One clove a day keeps the doctor away.

Support your immune system by taking care of the basics with diet, exercise, rest and time to renew. As Louis Pasteur said "The microbe is of little consequence if one's internal environment is in order". Eat five servings of fresh vegetables or fruit. Avoid refined sugar and mucous-forming cow milk products. One study showed one tablespoon of refined sugar inhibited the immune system for 24 hours. Drink one half your body weight in ounces of filtered water each day. Participate in movement activities that get your heart rate elevated five days a week to keep your energy and immune system healthy. Get eight hours of sleep each night, more if you need it. Don't become over stressed with too many activities or worries. Seek entertainment that makes you laugh and take time to connect with an inner state of calm.

Daily contrast hydrotherapy is very helpful in keeping your immune system functioning. End your hot shower with a cold rinse, as cold as you can tolerate. Let the water rinse over your chest and throat where your thymus and lymph glands are. This

tones the lymphatic system, which is somewhat like our sewerage system; it filters out impurities of the blood.

Take fish oil or cod liver oil daily. Ok don't cringe yet, a good quality fish oil should taste clear with a slightly mild fish taste. If your fish oil taste like an old dead fish it is probably rancid and will be more harmful than good.

Lastly, there are many things you can do when you begin to feel the first sign of a cold or flu. Take several grams of vitamin C each day in divided doses. Echinacea, Golden Seal, Licorice root, Maitake mushroom, Myrrh and other herbs are excellent in their ability to kill unwanted organisms. Do not take these if you are pregnant and do not give them to infants. If you start to feel achy and think you have something coming on; sweating is nearly full proof at preventing a full on infection. At bedtime take a hot shower or bath, then bundle up in warm pajamas or sweat suit. Drink a cup of double strength chamomile or mint tea, and then get in to bed. These teas promote sweating and help raise your body temperature, which creates an environment where bacteria and viruses cannot thrive.

Take time to take care for yourself this holiday season, do not overindulge in sweets or alcohol, rest well and take time to smell the mistletoe!

Dr. Pinault is Director of Shoreline Natural Medicine Clinic.