



# BE WELL NATURALLY

## Newsletter

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Did you Know....

- > According to the World Health Report of 2002, all 7 of the primary risk factors of chronic diseases are preventable.
- > Naturopathic doctors are highly educated primary care providers who integrate standard medical diagnosis with a broad range of natural therapies.
- Diet-related cancers account for over 30% of all cancers in developed countries.

### Naturopathic Approaches to the Flu

You may have noticed that it's flu season again. Seeing friends and family with symptoms such as fever, cough, chills, body ache, headache, nausea and vomiting. All of these symptoms are part of the body's attempt to eliminate the infection.



The flu (or influenza) is caused by a virus, which means that it cannot be treated with antibiotics. This leaves many of us feeling left out in the cold. So what is one to do?

It remains true that prevention is the best medicine. Influenza vaccines are one option of prevention and are readily available free of charge. Health Canada recommends the vaccine for

high-risk groups such as seniors, health-care workers and those with certain chronic diseases since it reduces hospital visits. In individuals over 65, the flu vaccine is reported to be approximately 30% effective.

From a naturopathic perspective, the best protection from the flu is a robust immune system and daily healthy habits.

Some easy recommendations for maintaining a healthy immune system include:

- washing hands regularly with soap and warm water.
- avoiding contact with those who are not well
- maintaining a healthy diet low in sugar and including generous amounts of fruits and vegetables as well as immune supporting foods such as garlic and ginger.
- wear adequate clothing, when temperatures are low and during the change of season
- get adequate rest and sleep

- exercise for 20-30 min on a daily basis.

- spend five to ten minutes a day focusing on your breathing, spend twice as long on the exhalation as the inhalation.

Naturopathic treatments for the flu focus on supporting and stimulating the body's natural healing processes. For example:

- Supplements such as bioflavonoids, Vitamin C and zinc support the immune system, increasing T cell production.
  - Warming socks can help fight off a flu. Soak a pair of cotton socks in cold water, wring them out and then put them on your feet. Put on a pair of wool socks on top and then go to bed. The body will respond by warming the feet, stimulating blood and lymph flow in the body, draining congestion from the head and reducing fever.
  - Herbal medicines can be used to support the immune
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### 'Tis the Season for Vitamin D

There is growing awareness that Vitamin D is required for optimal health. This awareness has sparked much investigation into the vitamin, mainly in the last 5 years. We have known for a long time that Vit D plays a vital role in calcium balance for bone health and the latest research suggests a role for Vit D in

the prevention of over a dozen cancers, MS, Type 1 diabetes and other diseases.. Solar UV-B radiation is the main source of the vitamin for most people, with adequate levels being reached in 10-60 min of summer sun exposure. Bu the lack of direct sunlight in a Canadian winter as well as sun avoid-

ance and extensive use of sunscreen in the summer means that many of us do not get adequate levels of vitamin D, leaving us more susceptible to certain diseases. In the winter I recommend a minimum of 1000 IU of Vit D3 for children and adults and 2000 IU for the elderly.

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## What's in Your Multivitamin?

Most of us believe that all multivitamins are created equal. A multivitamin is a multivitamin, right? Well recent research tells us that this may not be so. In fact, if you are taking a multivitamin that includes Vitamins A, E and beta carotene, it may be doing more harm than good.

For years these vitamins have been added to multi's based on a number of studies in the early 90's that showed people who had low amounts of these vitamins in their blood were more likely to develop illnesses such as heart disease and certain cancers. Recent research however, has determined that supplementing with these vitamins did not offer the same illness-preventing benefits. In fact,

taking these vitamins have been linked to negative health effects, especially in smokers and pregnant women. It turns out that low blood levels of these vitamins from the early studies were just markers for low fruit and vegetable intake. It should not surprise you that those who ate the fewest fruits and vegetables has the highest risk for heart disease and cancers.

One study found that pregnant women taking a daily multivitamin improved weight gain during second and third trimesters, reduced the risk of maternal death, reduced the risk of developing high blood pressure during pregnancy, and increased measures of infant development in their children.

Those who took a multivitamin with vitamin A and beta carotene showed no improvement for these measures. All of the benefit of taking a multivitamin was *erased* simply by adding vitamin A and beta carotene!

Taking a multivitamin can be a good way to ensure adequate vitamin intake, but it is no substitute for a healthy diet including lots of fruits and vegetables. My recommendation is that vitamin A and beta carotene should not be taken on a regular basis, especially for smokers and pregnant women. Vitamin E is okay at low doses (50 IU), but not at the usual doses of 400—1000 IU per day. What's in your multivitamin?

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## Flu (continued)

system and treat symptoms of the flu. Some herbs include astragalus, licorice, lomatium, echinacea, oregon grape, goldenseal, and ginseng.

- Homeopathic remedies such as *oscillococcinum* may provide relief of flu symptoms.

- Proper nutrition to support the body and provide energy is particularly important when faced with a physical stress. Eat nutrient-rich, easy to digest foods such as chicken and vegetable broths. Drink plenty of fluids to keep the body hydrated. Avoid foods that can depress immune function such as sugar, caffeine, and alcohol.

These suggestions can help to decrease the length of the illness and reduce complications. Building a healthy immune system is also important for preventing future illnesses.

Remember that natural therapies have an effect on the body and may interact with other medicines. Always consult a Naturopathic Doctor or other health care professional before starting any new therapy.

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## Acupuncture effective for Low Back Pain

Chronic low back pain is the most common reason for seeking complimentary medical care in North America.

A 2005 study of 75 Canadian postal workers evaluated the effectiveness of acupuncture versus standardized physiotherapy for chronic low back pain. Acupuncture was administered twice per week for 12 weeks. Participants were also counselled to eat a diet high in omega 3 fats,

calcium and magnesium.

At the end of the study, participants in the group receiving acupuncture reported significantly lower back pain and improved low back range of motion. The acupuncture group also reported a greater improvement in overall quality of life.

The authors of the study con-

cluded that acupuncture provided significantly greater improvement than physiotherapy alone for chronic low back pain.

Naturopathic Doctors are one of the regulated health professions that are trained and regulated to perform acupuncture in Ontario.

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## A Word on Safety...

Botanical medicines are becoming increasingly popular in North America. However, there is concern that the natural health product industry is growing too fast for regulators to keep track of. As a result, there are many products on the shelves of health food stores that have not been subject to quality control testing. This means that we often have no way of knowing that what is printed on the

bottle is actually in the bottle. Some Chinese and Ayurvedic medicines have even been recalled for containing toxic heavy metals such as arsenic and mercury, or even doses of pharmaceutical drugs. Taking these unknowingly could result in serious health issues.

Botanical medicines have been used safely and effectively for hundreds of years. They can be an excellent treatment option for many health

conditions when used properly and under the supervision of a qualified health care professional. I advise to only buy from trusted companies willing to provide 3rd party quality control studies, and those that clearly label both ingredients and dosages. It is also wise to avoid new or unfamiliar products imported from Asia unless directed by a health care professional.

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We're on the web!

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