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Journey to Health Newsletter

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The Flu: A Naturopathic Perspective

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H1N1, previously known as the Swine Flu, has certainly swept the airwaves and newspapers. Unfortunately, our experience of these reports have encouraged a great amount of fear. The fact is it's just like any other flu. Though some people have experienced serious infection that lead to death, *most* people infected experience mild to moderate symptoms: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, chills, fever, muscle aches, fatigue, loss of appetite, cough, runny nose and/or sore throat. One of the more distinguishing symptoms that health practitioners have noted is a large amount of mucous production in the lungs that is sometimes difficult to cough up.

H1N1 is spread through respiratory droplets produced by sneezing and coughing of infected individuals, released into the air and onto nearby surfaces. Anyone within one meter of an infected individual has increased risk of being exposed to these droplets.

STEP ONE: PREVENTION

The key this cold and flu season: prevention. **Eating clean, whole foods** means choosing organics whenever possible and avoiding processed, packaged and "fast" foods. Doing so reduces the overall stress on your body. And remember, an increase in stress of any kind disarms your immune system quite significantly. When you are grocery shopping, read the labels on products. Avoid sugar, artificial colours, sweeteners and additives. Choose fruits, vegetables, whole grains (brown rice, quinoa, whole rolled oats, buckwheat), healthy fats (flax oil, olive oil, sesame oil, nuts & seeds) and lean proteins (chicken, turkey, fish, beans, lentils, tofu, tempeh).

Sleep well. The average adult needs 7-9 hours of sleep per night to maintain health. Anything less and you begin to accumulate a sleep debt, one of the effects of which, is a lowered immune response. **Infection**

prevention hygiene includes regular hand washing and avoiding touching your face, throughout the day and regularly wiping door knobs and frequently touched surfaces and home and work with a natural disinfectant (try a mixture of water, white vinegar and a little tea tree oil). Reduce time spent in crowded settings and improve the airflow of spaces at work and home by regularly opening windows. **Balancing stress** supports healthy functioning of the immune system. Include healthful breathing, yoga, tai chi, qi gong, meditation or other stress reducing practices in your daily routine.

Vitamin D Supports Immune Balance

Vitamin D is a vitally important factor in immune balance and has been found beneficial in preventing H1N1 infection.

Measuring Vitamin D Levels – a blood test for 25(OH)Vitamin D is available through your medical doctor and your **naturopathic doctor** as is the best way to determine the optimal dose of Vitamin D for you

Getting Enough Vitamin D

1. Regularly receive 20-30 minutes of midday sun exposure during the late spring, summer and early fall, exposing as much skin as possible
2. During the winter months, supplement with vitamin D *daily*
 - a. Adults & Children 10+: 2000- 4000IU
 - b. Children age 1-9: 1-2000IU
 - c. Infants: up to 1000IU
 - d. Pregnant Women: up to 2000IU

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STEP TWO: UNDERSTANDING HEALTHY IMMUNITY

Something we have forgotten over the years is the importance of getting sick, now and then. Simply put, it builds your immune system defenses. Your body's response to infection, including the production of a fever, is the wisdom of nature at work. Bacteria and viruses release chemicals recognized by the immune system and the immune system sends a message to the brain to turn up the heat. The result is an increase in metabolism and shivering to produce heat and the constriction of surface blood vessels and the production of "goosebumps" to conserve heat. This fever response increases the number of white blood cells and their bug killing capacity, increases antibodies for bug detection, decreases availability of food for bacteria and decreases growth and reproduction of bacteria and viruses. In other words, fever results in improved detection and killing of bugs and reduction in their growth and multiplication. And, the improved detection of bugs, stays with you into the future.

STEP THREE: PROVIDE RESOURCES

If you do get sick, whether with H1N1, the regular seasonal flu or a cold, Your body has the wisdom to heal and your job is to provide resources. **Rest.** It reduces stress and provides energy to support the immune response. **Stay hydrated.** Focus on water, herbal teas and natural juices. Avoid sports drinks, as they contain high levels of sugar and present challenge to the immune system. **Eat well.** Make yourself a big pot of homemade soup with lots of veggies, garlic, onions and a few pinches of cayenne. If your appetite is low, start with just sipping the soup broth to provide some nutrients and keep you hydrated.

Warming socks. An overnight treatment, warming socks *reduce congestion* in the head, face, throat and chest to help you get a *better night sleep* and give your *immune system* a great *boost*. They are great for sore throats, bronchitis, nasal congestion, sinus congestion and infections, congestive headaches, coughs and upper respiratory infections.

Supplies: 1 pair of thin cotton socks, 1 pair of thick wool socks, towel, warm bath or foot bath
Directions: Before bed, gather your supplies. If you are someone who tends to have cold feet, make sure your feet are warm to start by sticking them in a warm foot bath for a few minutes and then drying them off. Next, soak the cotton socks in cold water, wring them so they're not dripping and take both pairs of socks to bed with you. While sitting on the side of the bed, put the wet cotton socks on your warm feet and the dry, thick, wool socks over top and into bed you go. Within a few minutes, your feet will begin to feel warm as your body carries warm blood towards your toes and pulls the congestion away from your upper body. When you wake in the morning your feet will be warm and dry.

Avoid getting lost in the fear surrounding H1N1 and begin with active efforts towards preventing illness this winter. If you are experiencing flu like symptoms, contact your naturopathic doctor, or medical doctor for additional support. If you are interested in more specific, individualized immune support, additional information on the topics covered here or testing your vitamin D levels, before beginning your supplementation this winter, contact the clinic for your appointment with Dr. Sarah (902-446-4072).

Additional Flu Prevention

Vitamin C

Adults: 4-6g daily, depending on bowel tolerance

Pregnant Women: 1g daily

Children: up to 1g daily, depending on bowel tolerance

Probiotics

Adults: 10-12 billion CFU daily

Children: 3-5 billion CFU daily, children's formula

Oscillococcinum (homeopathic prevention)

Everyone Age 2+: one dose (1/2 vial) weekly through flu season (can be dissolved in water for children)

****AVOID ECHINACEA:** As a strong immune stimulant, Echinacea may worsen symptoms of H1N1.

Autumn Sunshine Slaw

3 medium beets, peeled & shredded

3 large carrot, peeled & shredded

3 Tbsp fresh parsley, chopped

Dressing

2 Tbsp Dijon mustard

4 Tbsp apple cider vinegar

1 tsp celery seed

½ tsp sea salt

½ tsp honey

2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

Black pepper to taste

In a small bowl whisk together Dijon mustard, apple cider vinegar, celery seed, salt and olive oil. Season with pepper. Place beets, carrots and parsley in large serving bowl, pour dressing over salad, toss to combine. Taste and adjust seasonings.

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