

THE TIBB HEALTH GUIDE TO COLDS AND FLU

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A Science of Medicine
The Art of Care

It is August and most of us are looking forward to the first blossoms of Spring, and the hint of warmer weather which will bring relief to what has indeed been a bitterly harsh winter. Whilst many of us have suffered and are slowly recovering from this year's strain of the Flu, the change in season often brings with it a fresh onset of both colds and flus, which are a bother to most families, particularly those with younger children.

Our focus this month is on Colds and Flus and ultimately, how best to avoid them. According to medical science, Colds and flus are caused by viruses. They tend to enter our bodies through our noses and eyes, although the flu may also enter through the mouth as well. From there, they make their way into our sinuses where they set up camp and breed. Usually we infect ourselves by placing our own virus contaminated hands to our faces (such as by rubbing our eyes or noses). Less frequently, we can catch them from airborne sources.

What are the symptoms of Colds and Flus?

Colds: A cold is characterized by a run-down feeling, scratchy throat, watery eyes, runny nose, and sneezes. Sometimes a mild temperature is present (37-38 degrees). Cold symptoms usually last five to seven days.

Flus: The Flu often comes on suddenly and hits hard. It often begins like a cold, with a runny nose and a general run-down feeling, but then symptoms become progressively more severe, such as fever, sore throat, muscle pain, weakness, headache, dry cough, or loss of appetite, which develop abruptly in one or two days. Occasionally nausea and vomiting or diarrhea, or all three, accompany flu symptoms. Chills or a mild temperature are more common than with a cold.

Managing Colds and Flu's

Usually a cold is self-limiting and can be managed by common-sense care with rest, fluids, and hot salt water gargles. Flu on the other hand, is much more difficult to shake off and can often last for over two weeks. Most medications used for colds and flu provide relief of symptoms but don't kill viruses the way antibiotics fight bacterial infections.

Most doctors agree that were you to take Antibiotics, they would not work in combating Colds and Flus because it is a virus rather than a bacterial infection. Even if you may have a bacterial infection, the overuse of antibiotics over the past few decades has resulted in strains of influenza becoming more resistant, with very little relief for patients. This is one of the reasons why the focus worldwide has turned to holistic health and complementary systems of healing.

More and more patients are becoming aware of the importance of the age-old adage 'prevention is better than cure'. With immune boosters, vitamins, minerals, natural and herbal treatments now more readily available than ever before, we can all take charge of our own well-being. This applies as much to the common cold and influenza as any other illness. If, however, you do contract a Cold or the Flu, there are many ways to manage the symptoms, prevent the virus from escalating and ultimately restore your body to good health. Tibb is a holistic, integrative system of healthcare which views both Colds and Flus as an imbalance in the body which needs to be addressed and corrected.

According to Tibb, Colds are contracted in one of two ways. The first and most common cause is brought about through extreme changes in the environment. This is as a result of weather changes or in many cases, due to today's lifestyle, going from artificially heated homes and offices to the cold outdoors. The second and more serious cause is due to an imbalance within the body's homeostasis which makes it susceptible to contracting viruses and infections.

In both instances, the path to restoring good health and maintaining a balance in the body is achieved by adding much needed heat into the body. As the name 'cold' suggests and based on the season in which colds and flu's are rife it is quite obvious that sudden and excessive coldness in the air are often responsible for causing imbalances within the body which result in illness. From a Tibb perspective the treatment for both colds and flu's involve a similar approach to help combat the virus and strengthen the body's defense systems against future attacks. Each of us has within us an inherent wisdom which allows the body to heal itself. All we need to do is give our body's the necessary help.

Treatment for Colds and Flu's

Perhaps the most distressing thing about contracting a cold or flu is the discomfort which one feels from the many symptoms which the body undergoes. The first step towards feeling better is to alleviate pain and fever by taking the necessary medication. Avoid excessive use of over the counter flu remedies. These preparations do not fight infection and can actually lengthen the duration of illness. Symptoms like a runny nose actually help your body fight infection; suppressing them with drugs undermines the healing process. A saline wash, on the other hand, works synergistically with your body to flush out viruses (and provide temporary relief). There is another drawback to commercial medications: they can mask your symptoms making you feel artificially well. This entices you to over-exert yourself when what you really need is to be taking it easy, getting lots of rest and restoring the heat levels. Tibb offers six lifestyle or factors which can be applied to restore your body to good health. These are, following the correct diet, correcting your environment, breathing, resting, exercise and elimination. Below, are a few tips which you can follow for each of the lifestyle factors should you suffer from a cold or flu.

Diet

- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration particularly if you are vomiting. Water is especially vital as it helps to flush out toxins from the body. Avoid carbonated and caffeinated drinks.
- Gargle with warm salt water several times a day to ease a sore throat.
- Avoid all cold foods and drinks.
- Avoid all sour foods.
- Avoid dairy products especially cold milk
- Eat foods which are easy to digest such as soups.
- Add heating foods such as ginger and garlic to your diet.
- Hot chicken soup works wonders
- Increase your intake of Vitamin C
- Suck on a lozenge.

Environment

The excessive use of underfloor heating and heaters, whilst important for comfort in your home, can often cause or aggravate the flu as they tend to dry up the air excessively. You can do the following to maintain a positive and healthy environment:

- Invest in a humidifier or vaporiser and leave it on throughout the winter months. Enhance the value of your humidifier with oils such as Eucalyptus and camphor.
- Ensure that your heating is comfortable but not too hot.
- Dress in accordance with the weather.

Keep your feet warm at all times. (Those who are old enough will remember quite clearly the image of days gone by when a person suffering from the flu sat with his feet submerged in an enamel bath of hot water and a warm towel over his head. There certainly was wisdom in some of the traditional remedies!)

Breathing

- Boil some water and place a few drops of a heating oil such as black seed winter oil or eucalyptus oil in the water. Inhale deeply for five to ten minutes.
- Use a saline solution to wash out the nasal passages.
- Perform deep breathing exercises in the morning and evening, but avoid exposure to cold.
- If you are suffering from a cough, use a natural expectorant to clear out the lungs.

Rest

It is common knowledge that probably the best cure for the cold is to get adequate rest. While you are resting, your body has a chance to focus on healing itself without the unnecessary burdens of stress and physical work.

Exercise

Whilst it is advisable to refrain from vigorous exercises while you are ill, it is often beneficial to take a brisk walk for 15-20 minutes each day once you are feeling a little better. The fresh air will allow you take in much needed oxygen.

Elimination

Regular usage of laxatives are always beneficial. If you are suffering from a cold or flu, a mild, herbal laxative such as Laxotab will assist the body in clearing away any unwanted and harmful waste matter. Phlegm often builds up in the digestive tract, leaving one feeling severely congested and therefore effective elimination is particularly helpful. This is especially important for infants and children who are prone to phlegm related disorders in their early years.

Careful and consistent implementation of the above six factors, especially sufficient rest should help your body to gain strength and begin recovering quite easily. Obviously there are times when you need to seek medical help. If, after a week of flu-like symptoms, the following persists, it is advisable to see your doctor:

Warning Symptoms

- Any ear ache.
- Temperature of 101 degrees F. (38.9 degrees C.) or higher and fever that is persistent.
- Chest pain or shortness of breath.
- Coughing up yellow or green mucous.
- Severe sore throat.
- History of bronchitis, emphysema, asthma, heart disease, or any other chronic condition that is worsened by a cold or flu.

Avoiding Colds and Flu's

The best line of defense is to always be prepared. This applies to your body as much as to anything else in life. If you are aware of your body's individual needs at all times, and take the necessary precautions, you can build a strong immune system and ultimately strengthen the balance within your body. Regular use of complementary and natural immune boosters such as Septogard will strengthen the body's defense mechanisms. Below are a few tips to avoid colds and flu's in particular:

- Wash your hands regularly using soap and water. Never put your hands to your eyes or nose without washing them before and after.
- Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. The nasal passages are designed to keep dust and bacteria from the body and provide sufficient oxygen to the brain.
- Keep your feet warm during the winter months. Dr. Vogel, author of *The Nature Doctor*, writes: "The nose walls (conchae) react to cold feet. When the feet are cold the walls contract, become cold and dry and cause the glands to stop functioning, so that dust and bacteria are no longer filtered out. It is easy to see why a cold will almost inevitably result, followed by catarrh or a runny nose. You can now understand why it is important to avoid getting cold feet..."
- Keep an eye on the humidity of your environment.

- If someone in your household takes ill, it is wise to put up a separate hand towel in the bathroom for the healthy folks to use.
- Drink at least one and a half litres of water each day preferably lukewarm.
- Eat foods to suit the season. Ice-cream in winter is not a good idea.
- Always get sufficient sleep
- Avoid sugary and deep-fried foods

You have the right to be healthy, if you live well and take precautions you can ultimately stay healthy. Colds and Flu's do not have to cause undue distress nor should they recur throughout the winter season. By following the advice above, and through respect for your body's needs, you can maintain a positive well-being and remain healthy. Here's looking forward to your good health, and the coming spring without any change of season colds or flu's!