

COLD AND FLU PREVENTION AND CARE

PREVENTION

1. Wash your hands frequently. Be sure to rub your hands together well for 20–30 seconds before rinsing. Carry hand sanitizer with you for those moments when you can't get to a sink, and use it especially after touching money, doorknobs, railings, public transportation, etc.
2. Keep a supply of Yin Chiao Chinese herb pills on hand. I stock these at the clinic for you to purchase and they are, in my opinion, an essential component to the medicine cabinet! Whenever I feel like I'm on the verge of getting a cold I take them, and they nearly always keep me from getting sick. My family is hooked on them because they work so well! Keep them at home and stash some in your pocket or purse, office and/or travel bag so you can have them on hand when you're out.
3. Get acupuncture regularly. Acupuncture boosts the body's immune system. Acupuncture can also be used as soon as you feel you are coming down with something to help you fight it off and not come down with a full-blown illness.
4. Boost your natural immunity with Vitamin D supplements. 1000–2000 mg Vitamin D is recommended daily throughout the winter.
5. Probiotics, or "good bacteria, help to boost immunity and decrease the incidence of respiratory tract infections. Taking a daily probiotic supplement, which includes several types of bacterial strains (i.e. a combination of varying strains of acidophilus and bifidus), is best. Also be sure to take a brand that comes in an encapsulation that will bypass stomach acid without being destroyed.
6. Try to get a good night's sleep, and plenty of rest. The body is most susceptible to illness when fatigued, and sleep is a major immunity booster. If you have trouble sleeping, get some acupuncture to improve it, and see the handout on improving sleep.
7. Eat a healthy diet of whole, unprocessed foods that are cooked and warm. For more dietary recommendations, pick up a copy of my "Dietary Healing and Lifestyle Suggestions According to Chinese Medicine" handout.
8. Dress warmly and avoid getting chilled. Be sure especially to cover up the back of your neck, and to keep covered if you go outside into the cold after you've been sweating.

AWARENESS

Know when you may be sick with something serious!

Key signs and symptoms of the flu and swine flu are a fever and cough. These may also occur with chills, body aches, headaches, a sore throat and other respiratory symptoms. While you are sick, stay home and avoid exposing others to your sickness, unless you need urgent care. If you have a fever of 101 or over with a cough, and if symptoms aren't stabilized or improved within 24 hours, or if you are having flu symptoms and concurrently have another chronic illness, contact your doctor. You are contagious until 24 hours after your fever subsides.

SELF-CARE

If you do become sick, follow these tips:

1. Sleep, rest, and sleep some more!
2. At the very first sign of an itchy/scratchy throat, sneezing or feverish sensation, take some Yin Chiao Chinese herb pills to fight off an impending cold.
3. If your illness starts out with chills and tight muscles, try "sweating it out": drink some hot tea or soup and wrap yourself up with blankets until you sweat. It can actually release the muscle tension and kick the illness.
3. If you have a cold that is mild to moderate, you can come in for acupuncture right away and start taking an herbal formula to help get over it. If it is severe or you have the flu, stay at home.
4. Keep your diet healthy – soups, tea, cooked vegetables, grains and lean meat are best. Avoid dairy, fruit juice, oils/fats and cold or raw foods when you get sick, as these produce more phlegm and mucous.