



Newsletter: October 2009

All you need to know about INFLUENZA

What is it?

Influenza, more commonly known as flu, is a viral infection caused by the influenza virus. It's passed on when people breathe in liquid droplets containing the virus that have been sneezed or coughed into the air, or when people touch objects contaminated with the virus.

Possible complications include pneumonia, which often needs hospital treatment. It can be fatal.

The virus can cause infections all year round, but it's most common in the winter. Anyone can get flu and the more close contact a person has with people who have the virus, the more likely they are to get it.

Should I get vaccinated?

The UK has a safe and effective vaccination against flu, which is provided free by the NHS. It's recommended for people at greatest risk of harm from the flu virus.

People who are advised to have a flu vaccination include:

- Everyone over the age of 65**
 - Everyone aged six months or over who has lung disease (such as asthma), heart disease, kidney disease, liver disease, diabetes or lowered immunity**
 - Anyone living in a residential or nursing home**
- People caring for those at risk of flu complications**

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Those most at risk are advised to have a vaccination every year. This is because the flu virus changes slightly every year. Scientists work hard to predict the strains of flu virus and develop vaccines against them.

Despite popular belief, flu vaccination can't give someone flu as it doesn't contain the active virus. It's true some people experience symptoms of a heavy cold at the same time or just after they've had the flu jab. This is simply a coincidence and the symptoms are usually caused by one of the many common cold viruses around in autumn and winter.

Remember, it's still possible to catch heavy colds after vaccination, as the flu jab only protects people from the flu virus, not other viruses.

The flu vaccination is usually available from around October each year. Anyone who thinks they need it should talk to their GP or practice nurse

Reducing your risk

The best way to avoid getting flu is to strengthen your immune system by eating a healthy diet, taking regular exercise, getting enough rest and relaxation, and not smoking.

You should also avoid people who are coughing and sneezing, especially if they're not covering their mouth and nose.

How can I tell if it's a cold or flu?

Flu strikes suddenly and affects the whole body. One minute you're happy at work, the next you've been knocked for six and are too ill to do anything. It lasts for about seven days and generally leaves you feeling exhausted for weeks afterwards.

It's different from the common cold, in which the symptoms tend to come on gradually, usually affecting only the nose, throat, sinuses and upper chest. When someone has a cold, they're still able to get about and usually recover fully after about a week.

What's the treatment?

These are the best ways to treat the symptoms of flu:

- **Take plenty of rest because the body uses a lot of energy fighting infections**
 - **Keep warm**
 - **Make sure you drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration**
 - **Take paracetamol or anti-inflammatory medicines such as ibuprofen to lower a high temperature and relieve headaches and muscles aches**
- Drink hot water with lemon, ginger and honey**

▮ Antibiotics are no use to treat flu because it's caused by a virus ▮



Cold and Flu Recipes

This is the time of year it usually hits -- the "ick" that we all dread each winter. These aromatherapy recipes will help to heal the body and soul. Please use externally ONLY. Natural remedies work best when you use things for both external and internal healing, so remember to also take your zinc and vitamin C, get plenty of water and rest, and of course -- don't forget your herbs!

Cold Balm

- * 2 ounces coconut oil
- * 1 tablespoon almond oil
- * 10 drops Lemongrass essential oil
- * 10 drops Geranium essential oil
- * 5 drops Tea Tree essential oil
- * 5 drops Juniper essential oil
- * 5 drops Thyme essential oil

Warm the coconut oil until melted and add the almond oil to it. Add as much or as little almond oil until you like the consistency. Check thickness by dipping a cold spoon into the oil and feeling the blend with your finger. Before final cooling of the oil, add the essential oils and mix well. Store in a sealed, glass container.

Cold Balm is blend of antiviral essential oils that can be used for a cold, flu, or the general "ick" that is going around. Rub it on your chest, back, neck, behind your ears or carefully over the sinuses (on the forehead and under the eyes). You can even use a little dab on cold sores!

Sinus Steam

- *30 drops Eucalyptus essential oil
- *30 drops Rosemary essential oil
- *10 drops Peppermint essential oil
- *10 drops Thyme essential oil

Add all oils together and store on a bottle with an essential oil dropper. To make a steam, heat a pot of water on the stove. Do not boil. Put the pot of water on a trivet on the counter top. Put a towel over your head and the bowl and close your eyes. Drop 2 -- 3 of the Sinus Steam essential oil blend into the water and breathe deeply through your nose. Repeat 2 -- 3 times. Repeat this whole process 2 to 3 times a day. An excellent remedy for a sinus infection or head cold.

Respiratory Support Shower

- *1 drop Eucalyptus essential oil
- *1 drop Niaouli essential oil
- *1 drop Pine essential oil
- *1 drop Bergamot essential oil

Drop one drop of each oil onto a clean dry wash cloth. Rub over the skin, focusing on the chest and back before getting into a steamy shower. During your shower, hold the washcloth close to your face and breathe deeply. The washcloth may be worn around your neck for additional benefit. Have a little extra time for a bath? Add 5 drops of each oil to 1/4 cup of sea salt or plain yogurt. Add yourself before adding the blend to your bath.

OLD WIVES' TALES

THE COMMON COLD AND AILMENTS

1. Feed a cold; Starve a fever

There is a common old wives tale during cold and flu season that makes recovering much more difficult for some people. The old wives tale says that one should feed a cold and starve a fever, or some times it's said that you should starve a cold and feed a fever. Where this came from is really anyone's guess, but doctors today say that the old wives tale isn't correct at all; in fact it keeps some believers from getting well as soon as they might have.

The fact is that fluids are often lost when a person is ill with a cold or a fever, so increasing fluids is always a good idea. When sick, a person should always eat to make sure that their body has the nutrients it needs to get well, as well as the energy that the body needs to recover. So, when you are sick it's best to increase fluids and eat when you have an appetite!

2. Crazy Home Remedies (not recommended)

It seems that whenever you have a certain ailment of sickness, people will tell you some of the craziest home remedies that they swear will work to cure you or to at least treat the symptoms. These home remedies have usually been passed down from generation to generation and are known to be old wives tales. But let's face it - when you're really suffering, you're ready to try just about anything. Here are some old wives tales that might just do the trick.

- Drinking two glasses of Gatorade can take away a headache.**
 - Peppermint lozenges can clear stuffy noses.**
 - For muscles that are sore due to a nasty flu, soak one tablespoon of horseradish in one cup of olive oil for half an hour. Apply it onto the muscles, as you would massage oil.**
 - Mixing $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vinegar with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of honey has been said to cure sore throats. One tablespoon can be taken six times a day.**
 - For nasty splinters, apply a drop of glue over the splinter and let dry. Then peel the dried glue off the skin and the splinter will come out, still attached to the glue.**
 - When trying to heal and soothe boils, completely cover the boil with tomato paste. It's said that the acidity of the tomatoes is the real cure behind this remedy.**
 - For bruises, soak a cotton ball in white vinegar and press onto the bruise for one hour. This will reduce the colour and help with healing.**
- Use oatmeal for arthritis pain. Mix two cups of oats and one cup of water in a bowl and microwave for one minute. Let it cool slightly so it can be handled and then apply to the affected areas.**