

Ayurveda and Wellness

# SURVIVE THE COLD & FLU SEASON

Detoxify and rebuild with remedies and rejuvenation techniques

BY JEFF PERLMAN



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Fall is a time of shorter days and longer nights. It’s also the season when we may be more susceptible to the spread of colds and flus. When we implement some remedies and step up our self-care, our health can benefit. Colds and flu (influenza) are both viruses (small infectious agents that can replicate inside the cells of another organism). While some strains of the flu can possibly be prevented by a vaccination, there is no vaccine for the common cold. The World Health Organization recommends having a yearly flu shot which can be effective but also has much controversy with some.

COLDS VS FLUS

The symptoms of colds compared to flus can seem similar on the surface. People may experience a sore throat, runny nose, sneez-

ing, headache, and possibly a fever. What distinguishes the flu are its more pronounced symptoms. The flu affects the joints, and can cause respiratory complications, diarrhea, and vomiting, and even death. The common cold can stem from as many as 200 different viruses. It is spread through the air during close contact with infected people and indirectly through contact with objects in the environment. The primary methods of prevention are: hand washing; keeping the hands away from touching the eyes, nose or mouth and staying away from other sick people. Although there is no cure for the common cold, the symptoms can be treated with a variety of remedies. These include pharmaceutical remedies such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (ibuprofen is one) as well as cough medicines.

The traditional theory is that a cold can occur from exposure to cold weather, which is how it got its name. Some cold viruses are seasonal, occurring more frequently during the winter. During this season, viral transmission rates can increase. Seasonality also includes social factors, such as spending more time indoors near infected people.

MORE ABOUT THE FLU

Influenza, commonly known as “the flu,” is an infectious disease caused by one of the many varieties of the influenza virus. It can be spread by direct transmission from the aerosols from an infected person coughing, sneezing, or spitting and through hand-to-eye, hand-to-nose, or hand-to-mouth transmission, either from contaminated surfaces or from direct personal contact such as a handshake.

The symptoms of the flu include fever, runny nose, sore throat, muscle pains, headache, coughing, and fatigue. Nausea and vomiting occur more commonly in unrelated infections like gastroenteritis, which is sometimes referred to as “stomach flu” or “24-hour flu” which has possible increased complications including viral or bacterial pneumonia and sinus infections.

There are three main categories of influenza viruses. Influenza A is referred to as bird flu because birds are the natural hosts for these strains. It can be transmitted to domestic poultry giving rise to human influenza. Influenza B almost exclusively infects humans and is less common than influenza A. Influenza C viruses infect humans, dogs, and pigs but is the least common. Influenza spreads around the world each year, resulting in about 3-5 million cases, with outbreaks predominantly in winter.

Larger outbreaks (known as pandemics) are less frequent. In the 20th century, four primary pandemics have occurred: Spanish in 1918 (50 million deaths), Asian in 1957 (2 million deaths), Hong Kong in 1968 (1 million deaths), and in 2009 the A/H1N1 pandemic resulted in 200-500,000 deaths.

THE AYURVEDIC VIEW OF COLD AND FLU SEASON

From an Ayurvedic perspective, the cold and flu season begins as we start to transition





from the hot, bright and intense summer (governed by pitta) months of June through September into the fall (vata) season of October through January.

In the fall, the qualities in and around us become cooler, drier, lighter, and windier. This transition can weaken our immunity and make us more susceptible to illness. When the winter (kapha) season (February-May) arrives with its qualities of cold, wet and damp, heaviness and stagnation—the onset of illness can increase.

According to Ayurveda, the Vata dosha is responsible for regulating the immune system and Kapha dosha is responsible for regulating the respiratory and nasal systems as well as the stomach.

In Ayurvedic theory; like increases like and an energetic quality is brought into balance with the opposite qualities. A preventative program that takes these energetics into account is the best way to be proactive during the cold and flu season.

The first step to staying healthy is to balance and strengthen the vata dosha during the fall season. We do this by favoring vata’s opposite actions of warmth, wetness, heaviness, and stability. This grounds the body, mind, and spirit and strengthens the immune system for winter. When winter arrives, you could introduce some of kapha’s opposite actions which are: warmth, dry, light, and mobile.

**DAILY ROUTINE PRACTICES (DINACHARYA) TO BUILD RESILIENCE**  
**LIFESTYLE REMEDIES**

- Rest is probably the most important

consideration for supporting our immune system.

- Wash your hands often; soap inactivates viruses.
- Regular elimination is essential for maintaining vitality. Drink two cups of warm water each morning after brushing your teeth, this informs the body it is time to go and helps to maintain regularity.
- Stay hydrated. Drink half your body weight in ounces of either room temperature, warm water or herbal teas throughout the day for optimum digestion.
- Use a Neti Pot, the mild salt water solution supports nasal tissues and can prevent sinus infections.
- Gargling with salt water loosens excess mucus, removes bacteria, and relieves sore throats.

**FUNCTIONAL FOOD**

- Do not skip meals or overeat.
- Find regularity in your meal schedule (all regularity helps to balance the energy of Vata).
- Choose to eat your largest meal at lunch when the digestive fire is strongest.
- Stay away from processed, frozen, canned, and microwavable foods.
- Limit or stay away from cold, heavy, and acidic foods like meats, nuts, ice cream, yogurt, nightshade vegetables, and sour and green fruits. These foods can slow down digestion and cause buildup of undigested material (known as ama, or a type of toxin). Choose

lighter and simpler foods like soups and broths, white rice, cooked vegetables, and whole grain cereals.

- Use warm spices and herbs like ginger, turmeric, cumin, black pepper, cardamom, basil, rosemary, and coriander, which stimulate digestion and warm the body.

**HERBAL REMEDIES**

- Tulsi tea is specific for its adaptogenic effects for colds and flu and other respiratory imbalances.
- Chewing a small piece of fresh ginger relieves the symptoms of nausea and vomiting.
- Triphala churna helps to balance and strengthen digestion, immunity, and elimination.
- Chyawanprash is an Ayurvedic herbal jam. It’s base is amla fruit, which contains one of the most concentrated and bioavailable sources of Vitamin C in the plant kingdom. Amla and the other herbs in the formula have rejuvenating and revitalizing properties.

**AYURVEDIC TECHNIQUES FOR REJUVENATION & BLISS**

- Before bed, massage the feet with sesame oil, put socks on, and enjoy a good night’s sleep.
- Daily Ayurvedic self-massage will benefit the skin increasing calm and overall vitality and stability.
- Oiling the ears lubricates the upper eustachian tubes and the cervical lymph nodes benefiting the lymphatic and glandular system. This practice helps us to build immunity.
- Oil pulling or swishing is a powerful defense against a cold, removing bad bacteria and boosts the good immune-boosting bacteria in your mouth.
- Use Nasya Oil to lubricate nasal passages and open up sinuses.

**THREE SEASONS AYURVEDA HERBAL REMEDIES**

- Turmeric Nectar is a powerful anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antibiotic, antioxidant, antibacterial and alterative that regulates the immune response and aids in digestion.
- Jeff’s Cough Drops are delicious natural pain relievers made with fresh ginger, clove and licorice, with antiseptic, antimicrobial, expectorant and demulcent qualities.
- Ginger Turmeric Lemonade can break up mucus and reduce respiratory inflammation.

**SOOTHING AND RELAXING GOOD NIGHT DRINK**

This delicious drink will not only soothe the nerves, but benefits digestion and removes toxins from the deep tissues.

- 8 OUNCES (1 CUP) ALMOND MILK
- ½ TEASPOON GROUND TURMERIC
- ½ TEASPOON OF FRESH GINGER (GRATED) OR 1/8 TEASPOON POWDERED GINGER
- ¼ TEASPOON OF CINNAMON
- ¼ TEASPOON OF CARDAMOM
- PINCH OF PEPPER (PREFERABLY PIPPALI OR LONG PEPPER)
- ½–1 TEASPOON RAW HONEY

**Instructions**

- Bring the almond milk to a boil, turn off and whisk/stir in the turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, and cardamom.
- Let steep for around two minutes and then add the honey.

*Note: Fresh ginger is preferred because it has the energetics of being warming and balancing for all the doshas, while ground ginger is considered to be heating and can increase Pitta dosha.*

**DETOXIFYING AND STIMULATING GINGER BATH**

This invigorating and rejuvenating bath will sweat out toxins and relax the muscles but the addition of essential oils will benefit the respiratory system.

- 1/3 CUP DRIED GINGER POWDER
- 1/3 CUP BAKING SODA

**Instructions**

- Whisk the ginger and baking soda into your bath, relax for 15 minutes until you start to sweat.
- Optional Essential Oil Additions (add up to 12 drops of the following)
- Upper Respiratory Relief: Add eucalyptus, peppermint or sweet orange
- Fever and Flu Symptoms: Add tulsi, bergamot, or rosemary

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