

## **Will We Ever Find A Cure for the Common Cold?**

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From Labor Day weekend to the first signs of spring, Americans are inundated with advertising reminding us that the cold and flu season has arrived. Invariably the advertisements are coupled with warnings that this season's influenza will be more severe than last years and flu shots and non-prescription drugs are indicated.

Not surprisingly, a considerable number of Americans experience the sneezing, runny nose, watery eyes, sore throats, cough, fatigue and fever which we have come to associate with a cold or flu. Additional symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea may accompany the illness depending upon its severity and the persons susceptibility to the disease.

Over-the-counter cold and flu medicine sales top several million dollars a year. With increasing competition, this past season saw the addition of several "newer", "faster acting" "extra strength" medicines to the already saturated cold and flu medicine market. According to consumer advocates, these cold and flu medicines are simply new twists on old formulas which carry slick packaging and advertising campaigns.

Holistic health care physicians are nearly unanimous in their belief that over-the-counter medications which act to suppress symptoms actually worsen and prolong the condition. Ultimately this results in far more serious conditions such as bronchitis, pneumonia, low immune function and chronic fatigue.

### **Toxemia: The Real Culprit**

In order to understand how this occurs, one must first understand what a cold or influenza is. Despite what advertisers claim, colds and flu's are not caused by viruses or bacteria. Rather, these are opportunistic infections which are allowed to arise or take hold in a sick or toxic internal environment. The symptoms experienced by the person are really attempts by the body to eliminate the sick or toxic internal environment rather than a reaction to the external environment. This is the reason that during the "cold and flu season" some people are affected and others are not, even though constantly exposed to the same environment of microbes.

Sickness or toxicity of the internal environment is most often caused by excesses of tobacco smoke, heavy metal exposure, food additives, stale air from poorly circulated air flow and chronic constipation. Diets which are high in fats (greater than 35 grams/day), refined carbohydrates (white sugar, flour etc.), caffeine (coffee, tea, soft drinks), excess dairy, high amounts of salt and alcohol also contribute. Add to these stress, due to lack of sleep, over work, radical changes in environmental temperatures and lifestyle habits, and you have an individual who is ripe for opportunistic infection due to a sick or toxic internal environment. As each person is unique, one or several of these factors may contribute more than others.

As the body attempts to rid itself of the toxicity, it depends on the organs of elimination to do so. These consist of the liver, lungs, kidneys, skin, mucus membranes, and the immune system. Increased activity of the mucus membranes of the sinuses, nose, throat, eyes and ears, result in secretion of a sticky, thin to thick, gelatinous mucus which acts to eliminate excess toxins while removing microorganisms such as viruses and bacteria. The affected person experiences this as a runny nose, watery eyes, sore throat from sinus drainage and inflammation, sneezing, and plugged ears. Elimination through the digestive tract results in diarrhea and vomiting. Nausea, often a part of influenza symptoms, results from the inability to digest food and is the body's way of letting you know not to eat. This way, energy is diverted to removing toxins and fighting the infection rather than digesting food. Fever, which often accompanies colds or flu's, acts to burn off toxic materials while increasing the white blood cell and immune system activity.

### **Over-the-Counter Medicines, What Kind of Benefit?**

Over the counter cold and influenza medicines act in opposition to the body's elimination response. This results in a lessening of some symptoms but acts to prolong the elimination response. A "normal course" of a cold or flu in which there is no over-the-counter medication taken, is anywhere from 2 to 7 days depending upon the age and vitality of the person. (Persons with preexistent illness and the elderly generally take longer to recover.) On the average, persons who consume over-the-counter medications suffer with the illness upwards of 10 to 14 days or, in some cases, longer.

The prolonged exposure to microorganisms, resulting from the decreased ability of the body to detoxify itself, increases the chances of infection. This further adds to the persons discomfort and is termed an opportunistic infection. The person experiences a worsening of symptoms due to infection by microorganisms. This is due to their destructive and toxic effects on the tissues of the nose, throat, sinuses, ears, gastrointestinal and respiratory tracts.

Certainly during different times of the year there are greater numbers of viral and bacterial infections seen by physicians. This is due in part to the cyclical nature of certain viral strains and their increased presence during the different seasons such as the fall and winter. As more and more persons become the victims of opportunistic infections, these microorganisms proliferate and spread at a greater rate, thus exposing larger numbers of people. If the internal environment is sick or toxic then the virus or bacteria is able to take hold and proliferate, thus perpetuating the cycle.

Complications from incomplete treatment range from mild to severe, as the body, unable to fight off the disease, stands defenseless against opportunistic infection. Bronchitis, an inflammation of the upper respiratory tract, commonly is seen following an incompletely treated cold or flu. The illness has "taken hold" and now has gone deeper into the body. It has become a much more difficult condition to treat as any physician will tell you and sufferers who must deal with its lingering effects will attest. The lungs may become the next stopping place and the resulting pneumonia is a still more serious condition. This is

especially true with the very young and the elderly, adding to the mortality rates seen with severe influenza epidemics.

Chronic fatigue often follows a bout or series of colds or flu's. It is as if the body has become so weakened in attempting to eliminate the sickness and the effects of the over-the-counter medications, that it is unable to return to previous levels of health and vitality.

It is felt by many physicians that repeated use of medications which act counter to the natural healing mechanisms of the body results in a loss of memory or ability to respond to the disease process, thus weakening the person's vitality. It is further felt that continued suppression of the healing mechanism will ultimately result in a rise in chronic degenerative diseases such as cancer, arthritis, irritable bowel syndrome and auto immune diseases, a trend that has continued to rise over the past 60 years.

### **Prevention and Early Intervention: The Best Medicine**

It is inevitable that at some time in a person's life they will be affected by a cold or influenza. This is because no matter how hard we try it is almost impossible to control the many factors which contribute to a sick or toxic internal environment. Therefore it is important to begin preventive measures at the start of the cold and influenza season rather than wait for things to get out of hand.

I encourage people to increase their Vitamin C intake to 3-5,000 mg per day in divided doses. While Vitamin C is not as effective during an acute onset of a cold or flu, it offers one of the best protective mechanisms against toxemia of the internal environment. If the person is currently afflicted, increasing the dose will aid in the restorative process once the illness has passed. If too much Vitamin C is being taken, the person will experience increased gas and bloating and some diarrhea. Reducing the dose will eliminate these problems.

Couple the Vitamin C with extra beta carotene at 50-100,000 IU per day, also in divided doses, and the chances of developing a cold or flu becomes even less. Of course these must be accompanied by other preventive measures such as not overindulging in food or drink, lowering caffeine and alcohol consumption and eliminating cigarettes while getting plenty of rest, fresh air and fluids.

With an acute or sudden onset of cold or influenza, several measures taken immediately will often stop the condition from "taking hold" in the body or will decrease its severity and duration.

1.) Stopping or lowering your food intake will go a long way towards eliminating toxins from the internal environment. As mentioned previously, digestion of food requires energy and there are always waste products which must be eliminated, adding to the body's burden. As a general rule, if you are hungry, eat light foods such as vegetables and fruits which alkalize the body and neutralize the acidic toxins.

2.) Increase fluids such as water, herbal teas, soups and organic fruit or vegetable juices. A tea of lemon, ginger and a little raw honey makes a soothing drink which promotes sweating and elimination. Chicken soup is high in minerals, something the body needs more of in times of illness. If delivered by

"Dr. mom", chicken soup can be a powerful healer. Yarrow tea (*Achillea*) is probably the best of the herbal teas to use with a cold or flu. It promotes sweating and has antibacterial and anti viral properties which reduce the risk of opportunistic infection. It is important that the yarrow be as fresh as possible, loose leaf variety rather than prepackaged and of good quality.

3.) Raw garlic at 2 to 4 cloves per day finely chopped and swallowed with some water. Garlic is highly antibacterial and anti viral as well as having the ability to affect a number of body regulatory mechanisms. In my and many other physicians' experience, garlic capsules do not work as well as raw garlic requiring about 10 capsules to achieve the same results as a single clove. This has been verified in studies.

4.) Another medicine which I have found very effective in colds and flu's is Oscillococinum or Flu Solution the homeopathic nosode. (They continue to be the leading selling cold and flu medicines in Europe.) This medicine greatly reduced the number of influenza cases we treated during the past winter, often aborting the disease within the first 24 hours. Oscillococinum or Flu Solution works well because it stimulates the body's own self defense mechanism to eliminate the sick or toxic internal environment. This is also achieved with other homeopathic medicines such as Gelsemium, *Eupatorium perfolatum* and *Bryonia* if the condition has progressed beyond the initial stages and fits the individual condition of the patient.

5.) Herbal medicines such as echinacea, goldenseal and yarrow to name a few, also help to decrease the severity and shorten the course of the illness. Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) in particular acts to strengthen the mucus membranes and promotes elimination. It is contraindicated in pregnancy, which should be taken into consideration when self dosing. Echinacea is clearly indicated for colds and flu's and has proven very effective in these conditions. It is important that good quality herbal preparations be obtained as I have seen incomplete and disappointing results with a number of products. This is due to improper cultivation, harvesting or storage.

6.) Bed rest is also an important component in the treatment of a cold or flu, one which adults often ignore. Children are more likely to listen to what their body is trying to tell them by remaining quiet or sleeping more.

7.) A fever is a welcome ally to any disease process and should be encouraged, not suppressed. Often, at the first signs of a fever, the person is given aspirin or tylenol to "keep it under control". This only acts to prolong the illness. If a fever is left to complete its work, it will speed up the healing reaction and shorten the course of the illness. It is also nature's way of strengthening the body against further illness. Prolonged temperatures and ones above 105°F should be monitored closely. An optimal fever is one of 101°F to 103°F and of short (several hours) duration.

The question as to whether or not we will ever find a cure to the common cold is probably not the correct question to be asking. If viewed as an elimination process of the body rather than something that is external to it and something we "catch", colds and flu's can be seen as the body's attempts to clear itself and

as a useful process. Understanding the process of a cold or influenza and what your body is trying to accomplish makes it easier for one to combat them. By supporting the healing mechanism and following a few simple first steps, colds and flu's will become less of a burden as your overall health and vitality continues to flourish.