



Herbs for the Common Cold

Most adults will experience four to six colds in a year, and children may experience ten to twelve per year. Although many attempts have been made to find a “cure” for the common cold, still no cure exists. However, nature has provided us with a medicine bag of plants that will assist in shortening the duration and severity of symptoms commonly associated with the common cold.

What we simply refer to as a “cold” is actually a comprehensive collection of symptoms that are the body’s response to a number of viruses that affect the upper respiratory system. Generally during a cold an individual will feel fatigue, headache, upper respiratory congestion, sore throat, and some may also have a slight fever. The symptoms of a cold will generally last about seven to ten days. It is always a good idea to consult your health care practitioner to make sure you are not afflicted with a more serious illness.

Have you ever been in the same room with someone who was coughing and sneezing relentlessly, and complaining of not feeling well, then to have several more people who had been in the same room also become sick in the next few days? What about the individuals who didn’t catch the cold? How are they different from everyone else? Viruses are actually very picky critters and like their “home” to be just right. A strong, healthy immune system is not a good host for a virus, and those individuals who have a well supported immune system will contract a cold much less often than their friends or coworkers who have a weakened immune system or compromised immune response. Prevention of a cold can be attributed to a few simple factors; hand washing, good nutrition, healthy activity, and adequate rest. Creating a strong healthy environment within the body is the best protection against contracting a cold virus and will also assist in a speedy recovery when you do fall ill.

Even the healthiest people will catch a cold once in a while. When this happens, there are a variety of herbs that are highly effective in supporting your immune system and normal healthy organ and glandular function in order to reduce the severity and duration of symptoms associated with the common cold. When taken at the first signs of a cold the results can be quite noticeable. When taken after the cold is already underway, you may experience some relief and a shorter duration of your symptoms. Some herbs can be used individually to boost the immune system but most are more effective in combination. Knowing what each herb has the ability to do will help you choose the most effective herbs for your current condition.

Echinacea spp. (echinacea) is one of the world’s most important immune herbs. This powerful herb stimulates the body’s resistance to virus and bacteria.

Echinacea is:

- Anti-viral
- Antibacterial
- Anti-inflammatory
- Relieves allergies
- Detoxifying to the cells

Echinacea is most effective at the first onset of a cold, or first exposure to someone who is sick, when taken every two hours.

PARTNERS IN HEALTH CARE *Naturally*

Inula helenium (elecampane) is an herb that has a tremendous affinity for the respiratory system. Elecampane is astringent and tonifying to the mucous membranes of the respiratory tract and has strong immune support capability. This herb is commonly used for respiratory illness and chronic bronchitis and was a prominent herb used in the treatment of tuberculosis.

Elecampane is:

Expectorant

Soothes coughing

Increases sweating

Verbascum Thapsus (mullein) is an expectorant, astringent and demulcent. Mullein is traditionally used for soothing temporary mild respiratory tension as well as soothing irritated tissue in the respiratory tract.

Zingiber officinalis (ginger) can ease a temporary mild cough and thin mucous making for easier expectoration. Ginger also warms the body and is great when you have a cold or flu that also brings on chills. Ginger can effectively relieve nausea as well.

Herbs that support the immune system are traditionally combined for a greater overall effect that will address the large variety of symptoms you experience during a cold. Keep in mind that adequate nutrition, hydration and rest are essential to your health and recovery. A stressed body and mind can not recover as quickly as when you allow yourself to rest and recuperate.

Herbs are traditionally very safe. However, if you are pregnant or have any other health conditions, you should seek the advice of a qualified health care practitioner before choosing the herbs that are best for you.