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F O R L O N G E V I T Y

## Stay Healthy This Cold and Flu Season THE NATURAL WAY

by Paula Persson



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that each year 35 to 50 million Americans come down with the flu between November and March. Children are two to three times more likely than adults to get sick and spread the flu virus to others, and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to the effects of colds and flu. That means that the chances are pretty high that someone in most American households will catch a cold or the flu this winter. But instead of turning to conventional medicines, more Americans than ever are turning to natural remedies to restore their bodies to health. According to a May 2004 study from the Centers for Disease Control, 55 percent of Americans today combine alternative treatments with conventional medicines. As a growing number of consumers begin to adopt natural medicines and practices to treat colds and flu, many have found that navigating the world of natural medicines can be a daunting task. What are astragalus, kudzu, yarrow and mullein and how are they used? Do they work? Are they safe? Can these be taken with other medicines? What other treat-

ments should be considered? Following is a brief guide of a variety of natural remedies to consider as you try to select the best natural approaches to cold and flu care for your family this winter.

### ZINC

A popular alternative treatment for colds is zinc, which comes in either a nasal spray or in lozenges. Zinc treatments work by preventing many of the hundreds of different cold viruses from adhering to and multiplying in the back of the throat and in the nose. Zinc products work best when used at the first signs of a cold - when the first tickle in the throat comes on or when an individual first begins to sneeze or cough. If taken at the early stages of a cold, zinc prevents cold viruses from multiplying and can help to shorten the duration and lessen the cold's severity. Popular brands of all-natural zinc treatments include Zicam Cold Spray, Cold-Eeze Lozenges and Hyland's Sniffles 'n Sneezes 4 Kids.

### ECHINACEA

The most widely used medicinal herb in

America, Echinacea (purple coneflower) is thought to temporarily stimulate the body's immune system, making it more adept at fighting off viruses and other illnesses. Studies have shown that Echinacea is moderately effective in reducing the duration and severity of a cold. Echinacea is not meant to be used continuously and should be taken at the first signs of a cold and for one to two weeks afterwards. People who are allergic to members of the aster family, including artichokes, chrysanthemums, daisies, marigolds, and sunflowers, are advised against taking the herb. Also, because it is a nonspecific immune system stimulant, those with autoimmune diseases like lupus, multiple sclerosis, and rheumatoid arthritis should also avoid taking Echinacea. Take care in shopping for Echinacea products, as the FDA does not regulate herbal products. It's best to look for "standardized" formulations of the tincture derived from Echinacea root. A tincture is an alcohol-based liquid that can be diluted in water and taken as an herbal drink.

## HOMEOPATHY

Homeopathy is a natural approach to medicine that stimulates the body's curative responses so the body heals itself. Homeopathic treatments take into account all of the symptoms a person exhibits, including the mental, physical and emotional. Homeopathic medicines work quickly and safely for every member of the family. They can treat specific, targeted symptoms of a cold, which is particularly important because each person tends to exhibit a unique set of symptoms when they are sick. For example, while one member of the family may tend to have a stuffy nose when they're sick, another may have a nasal drip. The use of specific homeopathic medicines to address such unique symptoms on their own is called "single" remedy treatment. But, because there are more than 2,500 single remedies to choose from, the single medicine approach can be overwhelming for many consumers. To make it easier, many turn to homeopathic combination products. These products contain a variety of single remedies that address different cold and flu symptoms, so one pill may work for many members of the family.

Some of the most popular homeopathic products for colds and flu include Hyland's Complete Flu Care, Hyland's Sniffles 'n Sneezes 4 Kids, Alpha CF and ColdCalm. For example, Hyland's Complete Flu Care contains several different single remedies to relieve the symptoms of the flu—including Gelsemium and Bryonia, two effective homeopathic medicines that treat very different symptoms. So, if one family member exhibits body aches and headaches, the Gelsemium in the formula will work for him, but the Bryonia in the formula will specifically address another family member's irritability and body aches. Using comprehensive, combination products like Hyland's Complete Flu Care takes the guesswork out of finding the right single remedy. And because homeopathic medicines have no ill side effects, there are no concerns if the wrong medicine is taken. With a 200-year history, homeopathic medicines (single remedies or combinations) in the US are regulated and inspected by the FDA as drugs. Weight, age or combining with other medications aren't an issue when using homeopathic medicines, so even



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infants can safely take the remedies without worries about dosage. All homeopathic products are 100 percent natural, non-toxic, gentle and safe.

### DON'T FORGET AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

Of course, most people would rather prevent a cold or flu than to get sick in the first place. Incorporating garlic into the diet either as a pill or as part of meals is a natural way to boost the body's resistance to infection. And of course, adhering to common sense practices such as washing hands often, refraining from smoking, exercising regularly, stay-

ing hydrated and eating healthfully are great ways to keep illness at bay. Taking a few minutes to stock up on natural remedies and healthy foods can make all the difference for your family this year and provide safe, natural and effective relief from most common cold and flu symptoms. ■

**Paula Persson** has over 13 years of experience marketing homeopathic medicines for Hyland's, most recently as its Vice President of Marketing. She now serves as a part-time consultant in marketing strategy and is a full-time mother of two daughters in Southern California.