



# Cold War

## Some simple steps for fighting off common winter ailments

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As the days get shorter and the temperatures start dropping, the signs of winter have made their presence known. Along with Mother Nature's changes come other trademarks associated with winter's arrival—coughs, colds, and runny noses.

Instead of stocking up on lotion coated tissues for the inevitable onslaught of sneezes, a little preparation can go a long way toward avoiding future misery. While we can't escape the environment in which we live, we can change the environment in our body.

The key to staying healthy is building up your body's defenses. Before the big football game, it's standard practice to develop a winning strategy, preparing the team play by play. Well, much like preparing for that game, we can prepare our bodies for the cold and flu season.

## THE PLAN

### GET PLENTY OF REST

Eight hours is a good goal to shoot for. Rest is important to the body's immune function. It's a time to relax, rebuild, and prepare us for a new day. Sleep also gives the body a break from the every day stresses in our lives. So don't underestimate the power of a good night's sleep.

### TAKE YOUR DAILY C

The body uses Vitamin C, also known as ascorbic acid, more rapidly during times of physical or mental stress. That stress can depress the immune system, which keeps the body healthy. Vitamin C plays an important role in the immune system and a daily dose of it can help strengthen your body and ward off infection.

### EXERCISE YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Exercise plays an important role in overall health. Whether you take a 30-minute walk, four times a week or follow a weekly routine at the gym, exercise is important in strengthening the immune system. Exercise improves your ability to handle stress, improves circulation and oxygen delivery throughout the body, and increases the releases of endorphins, a mood-elevating substance in the brain.

### TAKE AN HERBAL ELIXIR

Astragalus, a Chinese herb, has been used for centuries to increase overall vitality. In fact, this herb increases interferon, a protein that protects cells against viral attack. The root of the plant can be boiled in water for 30 minutes to make a tea. Try adding a slice of the dried root to your soups and stews as they simmer to boost the healing power of your food. Taken before the change in weather and through flu season, this herb aids in the prevention of colds but should not be used for treatment after you have one.

### EAT GARLIC GALORE

Garlic contains a compound called allicin, which is responsible for garlic's pungent odor. It's believed that allicin also gives garlic its strong anti-microbial properties to fight off infection. Try dicing fresh garlic and sprinkling it on fresh steamed vegetables. Bake garlic and use it as a spread on bread or add fresh garlic to your favorite salad dressing. Raw garlic is best because cooking can destroy some of its anti-microbial properties. If you are worried about how your breath smells after your garlic feast, you can counteract it with a healthy intake of fresh parsley.

### **USE WATER AS MEDICINE**

The use of water as medicine is called hydrotherapy, a method of building the body's natural immune defenses that has existed for centuries. One simple form of hydrotherapy can be performed the next time you take a shower. Stand underneath the water, and alternate between tolerable hot and cold temperatures several times. Remember always to end with cold. This change in temperature increases circulation in the body and has been shown to increase the body's natural defenses.

### **MOTIVATE YOURSELF TO MEDITATE**

Relaxing the mind and body is vital to your immune system. Research shows that meditation has a positive effect on increasing immune function. Whether it's taking a few minutes each morning to sit in silence or breathing deeply ten minutes each day, anything you find relaxing can be a form of meditation. Reserving this valuable time each day can improve how you feel and provide a positive mental outlook.

### **SUPPORT YOUR DIGESTION**

Sluggish digestion can depress your immune system. To avert any potential problems, remember to chew your food well. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains is recommended because it contains fiber, which is important in keeping the digestive tract healthy. After a meal, try drinking peppermint tea, eating fresh papaya, or taking papaya tablets as any of these options will aid in your digestion. Avoid fatty, fried foods that are difficult to digest. Last but not least, limit your sugar intake because excess sugar consumption can also depress immune function.

There you have it. This season's game plan is in place to help you claim victory over this year's winter bugs. Remember, prevention is the key to optimizing your health. So start executing your game plan today!