



Flu Fighters

Eating healthy foods, exercising, minimizing stress and getting enough rest are known to keep your immune system working well and to prevent illness. Getting the seasonal flu vaccine and H1N1 vaccine can also provide additional protection. Yet unfortunately, even without best efforts, some of us will catch the flu this year. What can you do once it strikes?

First, avoid spreading the flu to family, friends and colleagues by staying home and minimizing contact with others. Second, take care of yourself. If you are feeling flu symptoms – key indicators are all-over body aches, a fever over 102 degrees and a hacking cough of acute onset. Contact your doctor within 48 hours to determine if the flu drugs Tamiflu and Relenza can help minimize symptoms and cut the severity and length of your illness.

Once you have the flu, your goal is to cut the duration and ease uncomfortable symptoms. While bed rest and plenty of liquids can help the healing process, there are many good home remedies. One way to cut the flu duration significantly is the black elderberry extract formulated as Sambucol. A study published in the *Journal of International Medical Research* (2004; 32:1320140) found that 90 percent of patients taking Sambucol elderberry extract recovered within three days. Participants who took a placebo were sick for at least six days. Black Elderberries are rich in anthocyanins which are a type of flavonoid. With almost five times as many anthocyanins as blueberries and twice the overall antioxidant capacity of cranberries, the black elderberry is a healing treasure.

Historians generally trace the tradition of the elderberry as a medicinal treatment to Hippocrates, the ancient Greek known as the father of medicine. He described the black elderberry plant in his "medicine chest" due to the wide variety of ailments it seemed to cure. Over the centuries, elderberry has been used to treat colds, flu, fever, burns, cuts, and more than 70 other maladies- everything from toothache to the plague – without side effects.

Remember, it's important to keep mucus thin so it doesn't congeal, and enable bacteria to breed. Saline nasal sprays can clear a congested nose and hot showers or breathing aromatic steam or cool mist can help open bronchial tubes. Popular aromatic steam remedies are simple – just add two teaspoons chopped ginger or a few drops of oil of eucalyptus to a vessel of steaming water, place a towel over your head and breathe deeply. Vitamin C



and Zinc tablets or Lozenges can add more antioxidants to your diet. Coughs can be minimized by using Mucinex or Robitussin OTC. Lozenges with zinc have been shown to increase antiviral activity.

Be sure to cough and sneeze into your arm, to wash your hands often and use hand sanitizers to avoid spread of your illness. If fever, cough and achiness persist, it is best to be seen by a physician.

John Mamana, M.D.
Executive MD
John@ExecutiveMD.com
703-260-6455