



TOPIC OF THE MONTH

December 2016

Support your Immune System

Tips to stay healthy through the winter months and all year round through supporting your Immune System

Your immune system is your first line of defense against colds and flus as well as many other illnesses and diseases. This time of year especially you want to pay attention to your immune system and support its function so it can support you!

Imagine your immune system kind of like spaceship that is monitoring your entire body, watching for perpetrators. In my mind's eye I see Marvin the martian from Bugs Bunny cartoons . . . watching over with his blaster, blasting away at suspicious molecules. We do have to keep him in check so he does not get too trigger happy, as he does in the cartoons -- and as with autoimmune diseases, imagine he is a good shot and has a good eye not mistaking foreign bodies for self. In this space ship we have a "command center" where we can monitor our entire body watching for perpetrators and monitoring our Marvin martians to make sure they are not overworking.



The point is with this little visualization is that we are not sitting ducks playing Russian roulette WE HAVE AN IMMUNE SYSTEM THAT IS OUR FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE. We don't have to get sick just because someone around us is. What we need is not only a strong immune system but also a smart immune system that does not mistake self for disease. There are many tools available to us to help keep our immune system both strong and smart. Here are some ideas:

Herbs and Spices

Herbs and Spices top the list. They are our medicine — and they are very effective medicine without any side effects at that. The trick is you actually have to use them ... so many people buy them and then let those pretty little bottles sit around way too long. Here are some tips of the most powerful herbs and ways to get them in your body.

Turmeric tops the list. It is a power tool for your brain, with many studies that support turmeric in preventing dementia and Alzheimer's through its enhancement of BDNF in our brains. Along with that it has powerful anti-inflammatory action, supports the good bacteria in our body, challenges cancer cells, supports the function of the liver, improves cellular health — over 600 uses for turmeric has been found in our bodies.



And a note here, curcumin supplements are not the same as the whole herb — as with all herbs! Supplements are not the answer. Here are some of the facts on turmeric vs. curcumin. There are many other active beneficial ingredients in whole turmeric outside of just the curcumin. Supporting data:

1. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248706255_Curcumin-free_turmeric_exhibits_anti-inflammatory_and_antitumor_activities_Identification_of_novel_components_of_turmeric
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23847105>
3. <http://nutritionfacts.org/video/turmeric-curcumin-plants-vs-pills/>

Here are some ways to use turmeric everyday:

I prefer to make some version of **turmeric tea every morning**:

- ☪ My favorite is chop the whole root with a little ginger and a sprinkle of fresh ground black pepper. Steep it for about 15 minutes.
- ☪ When I don't have fresh turmeric root, I use the powder, and mix it various other herbs or spices like cayenne or ginger and black pepper (black pepper improves the absorption of turmeric).
- ☪ Also cooking frequently with turmeric is good. Turmeric is best absorbed in small culinary doses throughout the day, so each time you heat up oil in a skillet throw in a pinch of turmeric powder.
- ☪ When I feel like I need a "heroic" dose of turmeric I use about 1/2 cup turmeric powder, about 1" sliced fresh ginger, and a sprinkle of black peppercorns. Put this in about a cup of water and boil down to a paste. Add 1/3 cup coconut oil and stir it in. You can put this in a jar and refrigerate for a week or two. I then take 1 tablespoon of the paste, mix it in warm water for a thick tea or coconut milk or heavy cream (grass fed).
- ☪ **AND MY FAV TURMERIC LATTE** - Make the above turmeric paste by cooking down 1/2 cup turmeric in 1 cup water (with the ginger and black peppercorns as above). Remove the paste from heat and stir in about 1/3 cup coconut oil. (You can store this in a glass jar in the fridge for about a week). When you are ready take a heaping teaspoon of the turmeric/coconut oil paste, put it in a mug and sprinkle with a dash of cinnamon, cardamom, and clove. Top with steamed milk of your choice (if you don't have a milk steamer heat it up on the stove and froth it with a french press). Recommended milk: Pastured, Local, organic, raw or vat pasteurized milk or organic real coconut milk.
- ☪ Quick and easy turmeric paste: About 1/4 tsp turmeric, black pepper grinds, 1/2 tsp honey, and a 1/2 tsp ghee or coconut oil. Mix together and consume.

☪ My turmeric tea recipe when I am feeling a little under the weather:



- o Fresh sliced turmeric root (lots)
- o Fresh ginger
- o Black cumin seeds
- o ground peppercorns
- o sprinkle of turmeric powder (the powder vs. the whole root each has different benefits)
- o Pinch or two of cayenne to taste or a chili pepper

Pour boiling water over and let it steep about 10-15 minutes

- o Strain and add (optional if you don't have):
- o Echinacea Tincture
- o fresh lemon juice
- o local raw honey
- o top with a teaspoon or two of coconut oil

Stir well and enjoy.

Herbal teas every night! Every night brew an herbal tea to sip. The Mediterranean Spices like oregano, rosemary, thyme, marjoram, mint make great teas. As with any other herb you have, just give it a try. My favorite for this year are the tagetes calendula (marigold) flowers I dried from my garden. Lemongrass is another favorite that is easy to grow and produces big beautiful grass in your yard. This is an effective way to get the medicine :)

Adaptogenic herbs are another class of herbs you want in your life. There are specific plants that have unique properties to bring balance to the nervous system and our adrenals (responsible for our stress hormones). These are called adaptogens. Some of the most popular adaptogenic herbs are tulsi (holy basil) which is readily available these days in health food stores as tea.

Shilajit is an interesting Ayurvedic adaptogenic herbs that oozes through the cracks of the high mountains in the Himalayas. You can get it in powder form and add a sprinkle to your smoothies. There is also rhodiola to make tea from (available at Mountain Rose Herbs) and an Ayurvedic tea called prana tea that has ashwagandha and shatavati in it -- two of the most popular ayurvedic adaptogenic herbs.

Here is a delicious hibiscus tea recipe that uses cinnamon and anise seed pods for a lovely refreshing taste and a powerful antioxidant boost. I came across this tea in a quaint little restaurant in Berlin:

Hibiscus tea leaves (I get from Mountain Rose Herbs)

Whole Anise Star Pods

Cinnamon Sticks

Mint leaves

Honey — honey with the comb is really pretty in this concoction.



Put all ingredients except honey in a tea pot or a glass pitcher (this one is pretty, i make it in 1 qt. mason jars often), pour in boiling water (let it rest before pouring if not using tempered glass). Add the honey when the brew is drinkable temperature.

And here is a great digestive tea using some of the indian spices:

Cumin, Coriander, and Fennel seeds. Slightly more fennel seeds. Put a tablespoon or so of each seed in pot and pour boiling water over. Let steep covered at least 5 minutes.

And simply a piece of ginger root makes a great warming digestive tea that strengthens our immune system.

Here is a go to tea if feeling under the weather: Sage Tea

Ingredients:

- 1 Quart Water
- 12 Fresh Sage Leaves (Dry is ok too, but fresh is more potent!)
- 2 Tablespoons Local Honey
- 2 Tablespoons Fresh Lemon Juice
- A pinch of Cayenne Pepper

Preparation:

1. In a teapot or saucepan, bring water to a boil.
2. Add the sage leaves and remove the teapot or saucepan from heat.
3. Let steep for 15 minutes.
4. Stir in the remaining ingredients adding honey when the tea is drinkable



temperature.

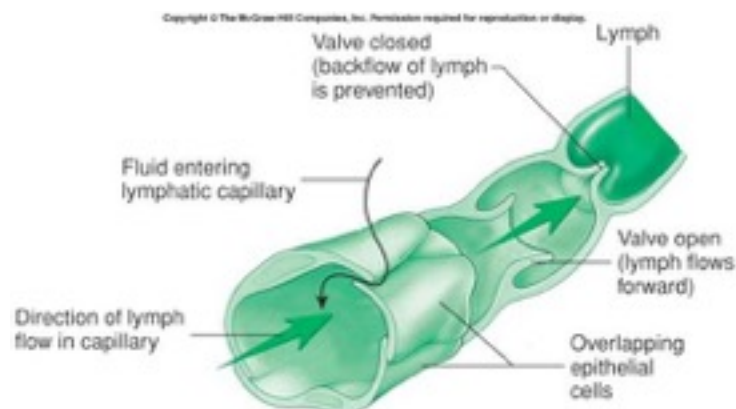
5. Pour a cup full, breath in the beautiful aroma, say a healing blessing, and enjoy!

Two to three cups of sage tea per day when feeling symptoms of a cold or flu is my medicine. Sage is generally viewed as being a very safe herb to experiment with, but as always, do your own research and make sure it feels right for you.

Your Lymphatic System and a daily oil massage — aka Abhyanga.

This routine comes with a lesson on your lymphatic system:

Our lymphatic system is like our body's water ways. Lymph is the fluid that circulates through our lymphatic system. It is formed from fluid that leaks out of the capillaries -- our capillaries are known as little leakers ;) (because the arteries have pressure from the pumping of the heart, some of the fluid leaks from the capillaries into the spaces between the tissues





in our body, the leaked fluid is called interstitial fluid or tissue fluid). The Lymph vessels “suck” up this interstitial fluid through little spaces in the vessels. This fluid contains pieces of cells, proteins, salts, waste, urea, glucose, and various substances that change composition depending on what is being leaked. This fluid is then moved along the lymphatic vessels toward our thorax.

Lymph nodes are filters of our body, they lie along the lymphatic vessels -- lymph nodes have white blood cells called lymphocytes, as the interstitial fluid passes through the lymph nodes the fluid is filtered and any bacteria is destroyed by the white blood cells within the lymph nodes. We have lymph nodes behind our ears and jaw, in our underarm area, and the majority in our gut.

The cleaned fluid is then transported via the lymph vessels to the thoracic duct (a large duct behind the sternum --It is the largest lymph vessel in the body, being about 16 in (41 cm) long and 0.25 inch (0.6 cm) wide) from there the interstitial fluid goes up to the left subclavian vein where it is dumped back into our blood for use (our right head, neck, chest and arm lymph fluid is delivered directly to the right subclavian vein). The best way our body can get the fluid from the thoracic duct upward to the subclavical vein is through our breath (due to pressure changes)! Deep thoracic breathing is especially beneficial in moving this cleaned lymph fluid.

Lymph has a very important job in our body, but it does not have the heart to pump it, it is moved by breathing, walking, intestinal activity, muscle action and massage. Lymph fluid moves much slower than blood -- and it relies on our body movements -- as muscles tighten, lymph vessels are squeezed and lymph is pushed along its path.

Oil Massage to benefit your lymph system:

The lymph vessels are close to the skin surface. They run along similar channels as the blood vessels but they are different in that they are easy to compress whereas blood vessels are not. A lymphatic massage is more of a light massage that stretches the skin as you rub in oil.

The best time to do your massage is just after your shower, before you towel dry.

☯ Winter = Sesame oil or vata oil (organic and cold pressed), vata oil has additional herbs in it

☯ Summer = Coconut oil, organic virgin

☯ Spring = olive oil (extra virgin organic) or mustard oil

Use long strokes on your bones and circular motions around your joints and organs. Massage your entire body starting at your forehead and including the soles of your feet -- and between your toes (this is especially nice at night) it helps to prevent athletes foot because it keeps your skin from cracking which is what allows bacteria to enter. Once a week include your head and scalp in the massage.

In addition to supporting your lymphatic system, here are some of the benefits traditionally associated with regular performance of this pleasant daily ritual:

☯ Increased circulation, especially to nerve endings



- ☯ Toning of the muscles and the whole physiology
- ☯ Calming for the nerves
- ☯ Lubrication of the joints
- ☯ Increased mental alertness
- ☯ Improved elimination of impurities from the body
- ☯ Softer, smoother skin
- ☯ Increased levels of stamina through the day
- ☯ Better, deeper sleep at night

Neti = Saline nasal wash & Nasya = oil in the nostrils

The practice of neti is pouring warm salt water in one nostril and letting it run out the other nostril. This is an ancient practice that has recently been accepted by modern medicine—the reason for this is it has recently had studies show it to help prevent sinus infections.

- ☯ It needs to be mostly a daily practice, if you wait until you are getting a cold to use it—it is too late, mucus has already started to block your nasal passages. Doing neti most days will prevent blockages in your nasal passages.

Neti removes mucus and pollution from the nasal passages and sinuses. It helps prevent the common cold, relieve allergies, and sinusitis, helps manage asthma, pneumonia, and other respiratory tract diseases. It also runs over the optic nerve, cleansing this nerve.

Nasya means “to place here” and refers to putting some drops of oil in the nose. After neti — and especially in the winter months — you want to lubricate your nasal passage with sesame oil or special Ayurvedic oil with herbs in it called nasya oil. Keeping your nasal passages lubricated allows the cilia or little hairs that line the nasal passages to do their job and filter the air we breathe. When the nasal passages get dried out the cilia do not function properly.

Nasya also benefits the lymph nodes in the cervical area — which house the majority of our Ear Nose and Throat immunity. It is recommended to tip your head back, put a few drops into each nostril and then sniff sharply while alternately pressing on each nostril so as to feel the oil reaching the back of your throat.

And while you are at it with the oil . . . **Might as well Oil your ears too!** I do this once or twice per week:

Place a drop or two of warm sesame oil or olive or garlic infused olive oil in each ear and massage. Then massage all around your ears :

- ☯ Pull up on each ear alternating 10-20x
- ☯ pull back on each ear alternating 10-20x
- ☯ pull down on each ear alternating 10-20x
- ☯ push forward from behind on each ear alternating 10-20x



ॐ Then massage all around your ear, the flap, the earlobe and outside your ear. There are a lot of nerve endings in the ear so this feels especially good. And it benefits your cervical lymph as well. In the beginning you may notice tender areas, eventually those will go away.

More Oiling of your body is coming . . . another daily ritual for me is **Oil Pulling**:

Oil pulling involves taking a swig of sesame oil and swishing it in your mouth for 10-20 minutes. This softens the plaque on your teeth and is more effective at removing plaque than scraping. This is another common ayurvedic technique that is getting more common. And for a good reason — Scientific research has proven the same disease causing bacteria that cause gum disease are also found in hardened arterial walls of someone who has coronary heart disease. And not only heart disease, periodontal disease has also had a clear link to :

- ॐ Heart Disease
- ॐ Stroke
- ॐ Cancer
- ॐ Diabetes
- ॐ Arthritis

The point of access being the mouth — periodontal disease makes the gums pull away from the teeth. Once the skin has left the gum tissue, the disease causing bacteria have access to our capillaries. The bacteria swim into these exposed blood vessels and begin to attack the rest of the body.

The connection between gum disease and these other major diseases in our society has become clear in recent years. Periodontal disease causes chronic systemic inflammation which directly increases the risk factors of other systemic inflammatory diseases.

What to do if you start to feel like you are coming down with a cold or flu?

Fire Cider!

Fire cider is an ancient cold remedy steeped in folklore roots.

It is a brew of herbs and vegetables steeped in apple cider vinegar that is immune boosting, anti-inflammatory, anti-viral, anti-bacterial, and a decongestant with a spicy kick. The spicy kick helps to thin the mucus so your body can expel it easier -- thus it can help to prevent sinus infections, etc. It will also help with digestion and warm you up on a cold day.

It is a brew of:

- Fresh grated horseradish
- Fresh grated ginger
- A whole head of garlic
- A large onion
- Several chopped chili peppers
- Zest and juice of one organic lemon
- Turmeric



Herbs of your choice, I like rosemary -- oregano is also a good one to use as it has strong antibacterial properties.

Apple cider vinegar with the mother.

Grate or chop all of your cold-fighting roots and herbs and place them in a quart sized jar. If you've never grated fresh horseradish, be prepared for a powerful sinus opening experience! Use a piece of natural parchment paper or wax paper under the lid to keep the vinegar from touching the metal. Shake well. Store in a dark, cool spot on your counter (or some place you remember it) for one month and shake daily.

After one month, use cheesecloth to strain out the pulp, pouring the vinegar into a clean jar. Be sure to squeeze as much of the liquid goodness as you can from the pulp while straining. If you like you can add approx. 1/4 cup of honey and stir until incorporated. Taste your cider and add another 1/4 cup until you reach the desired sweetness.

Ingredient Variations

These herbs and spices would make a wonderful addition to your Fire Cider creations: [Thyme](#), [Cayenne](#), [Rosehips](#), [Ginseng](#), Orange, Grapefruit, [Schizandra berries](#), [Astragalus](#), [Parsley](#), [Burdock](#), [Oregano](#), [Peppercorns](#)

This topic is continued next month in January 20178 with a topic on stress. As we know stress shuts down our immune system allowing viruses and diseases to take hold. The downside of knowing this . . . the mind is a powerful tool . . . turns out believing stress is bad makes it even more so. What to do then? We already know . . . and none of us can avoid all stress. The answer lies in: **How you think about stress.** Watch for next months posting