

## What NDs Do for Colds & Flu

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### Five naturopaths share the inside scoop on natural immunity

Health practitioners are exposed to coughing and sneezing patients every day. How do they fight colds and flu during winter months, and what do they do if a seasonal bug strikes? These five naturopathic doctors give us some valuable insights.

Almost all take vitamin D to support immune function, with dosages often based on blood tests, plus fish oil, and a multivitamin or similar combination of essential nutrients. And there are other common threads: Washing hands to reduce contagion. Staying hydrated, because viruses attach more easily to dry membranes in the mouth and nose. Avoiding sugar, because even a teaspoon suppresses the immune system for hours, according to a study. And, getting enough sleep, eating a wholesome diet, and regular exercise are other essentials. Should they get sick (a rare event), treatment might include intravenous nutritional cocktails if over-the-counter natural remedies don't do the trick. Despite similarities, each has some personal favorites.

#### Here are some highlights:

"If you avoid things that are inflammatory, you're giving your body every chance to fight off things in the winter," says Pournadeali. This includes avoiding foods he doesn't tolerate well, based on testing; skipping heavy, high-fat (except for oily fish), or fried foods; and having a daily green drink made with fresh leafy greens. If he did get sick, he would stay home in bed and wrap his head and neck for extra heat, to speed recovery.

Equally important, continues Pournadeali, "I try to find the good and the humor in things, even if it's a difficult situation. If the turkey is burnt, well, maybe everyone will eat more nutrient-rich vegetables, despite themselves." And, he reduces stress by doing things he enjoys—being productive at work, spending time with his wife and daughter, and tinkering with cars. "The key," he says, "is to be good to yourself and your body."

#### Supplements

**For prevention:** Extra vitamin A, licorice tea or tincture, and oral and chewable probiotic supplements. “Emerging research suggests that chewable probiotics may reduce upper respiratory infections,” he says. **For treatment:** Tincture of lomatium, which is antiviral, and gargling with salt water—too salty to swallow—three or four times daily.

***Kasra Pournadeali, ND:*** *Founder and director, of the Northwest Center for Optimal Health in Marysville, Wash., and president of the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians*

Despite living in a sunny climate, vitamin D, with a dosage based on blood tests, is a vital component of Khoshaba’s immune-boosting strategy. “I’m not outdoors except for short periods of time, and most people don’t get to optimal levels of vitamin D with sun only,” she says.

Although a healthy diet and exercise—three to five times a week, including cardio, weight training, and yoga—are a year-round routine, she says, “It’s even more important in winter because I’m constantly exposed to germs in my environment.” An infant daughter gives her extra incentive.

In addition to avoiding sugar and dairy, she gets plenty of fluids: water—half her body weight in ounces, daily—and a winter soup. “I make a chicken noodle-type soup with lots of garlic, ginger, and onions, at least once a week,” she says.

## Supplements

**For prevention:** An intravenous nutritional combination every week or two, a daily herbal formula with immune-supporting herbs such as echinacea and astragalus, high-dose vitamin C, glutamine, and B vitamins. For a sore throat, Khoshaba gargles with salt water and a pinch of cayenne. At the first sign of flu symptoms, she takes Oscillococcinum, a popular homeopathic remedy.

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***Linda Khoshaba, NMD:*** *In private practice at Integrative Health in Scottsdale, Ariz., focusing on women’s and children’s health, diabetes management, and prolotherapy*

“If bacteria or viruses cannot attach to mucous membranes, they can’t harm you,” says Sodhi. To prevent attachment, he uses a Neti pot to flush out his nose, once or twice daily, with baking soda and sea salt (½ teaspoon of each) in a cup of water (a saline nasal spray also works). Then, to create a protective barrier, he coats the inside of his nose with olive or coconut oil.



Sodhi makes a point of eating seasonal fruits and vegetables, including four or five servings of green vegetables daily, nuts and seeds, and a variety of grains. And he eats less pasta or other carb-rich foods in winter. Equally important, he says, “Exercise keeps your lymphatic system cleaned out,” which helps to keep bugs away. Breathing exercises also enhance immunity. For example: breathing in through the nose, holding it for three seconds, and then breathing out through the mouth.

## Supplements

**For prevention and treatment:** Amla, also called Indian gooseberry, and an Ayurvedic formula with holy basil and other herbs, called Flucomune, balance the immune system and are antiviral, antifungal, and anti-allergy. And, 15 mg of zinc, twice daily.

**Virender Sodhi, ND, MD:** *Founder of the Ayurvedic and Naturopathic Medical Clinic in Bellevue, Wash., and author of Ayurvedic Herbs: The Comprehensive Resource for Ayurvedic Healing Solutions*

“Electrolytes help hold fluid in cells so your membranes will stay moist and work better as a defense against cold and flu viruses,” says Bove. Her favorite sources of electrolytes, which include potassium, magnesium, and trace minerals, are a daily wellness tea, made with nettles, elder flower, anise seed, spearmint, and yarrow flower; fresh vegetable juices; and warm miso broth. These are hydrating and improve immune function.

“I live in New Hampshire and it’s cold,” says Bove. “But if you get out regularly in the winter, it really helps your immune system because you have these little ‘mini challenges,’ and it helps your system deal with the cold and dark months better.” Four or five times a week, she cross-country skis, and frequently goes for walks.

## Supplements

**For prevention:** A serving of elderberry cough syrup, mixed in a cup of hot water, and andrographis. **For treatment:** higher-dose andrographis and Gaia Quick Defense, which contains an extract of echinacea root with alkylamides, a key active ingredient. “It’s really important to have the right parts of the plant that are harvested at the right time,” says Bove. Some echinacea supplements are made from blossoms, which work best for prevention, whereas the root extract works best as a treatment.

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**Mary Bove, ND:** *Based in Columbia, NH, Bove is a medical educator for Gaia Herbs and author of An Encyclopedia of Natural Healing for Children and Infants*



“I know that my immune health in the future is determined by the decisions I make right now,” says Larson. To that end, he has some distinct dietary rules. Being gluten-intolerant, he avoids gluten, but also steers clear of gluten-free foods that are high in starch or sugar. Avoiding any food with high fructose corn syrup or trans fats (partially

hydrogenated oils) is “non-negotiable,” as well as skipping holiday sweet treats and generally going easy on sugar and alcohol. And he stays away from dairy because it increases mucous in the throat and sinuses which, he points out, are “breeding grounds for bacteria and viruses.”

### **Supplements**

**For prevention:** Extra vitamin A and extra antioxidants from a greens powder. Chewable vitamin C, letting it dissolve to coat the mouth before swallowing. For a dry or scratchy throat, Larson gargles with a few drops of elderberry tincture or oregano oil in a shot of water, so that it saturates tissues, and then swallows the mixture. At the first sign of sinus congestion, he recommends inhaling steam (with a towel over your head) from a few drops of essential oils of thyme, eucalyptus, peppermint, and/or lavender in a bowl of just-boiled water.



***Chad Larson, NMD, DC:*** *In private practice in San Diego, including endocrinology, orthopedics, sports medicine, and environmentally induced chronic disease, and an advisor to Cyrex Laboratories*