

Common Cold

Prevention of the common cold involves keeping your body and immune system healthy. Healthy nutrition, moderate exercise and a good night's rest are obvious. There is a saying in Chinese Medicine that it is good in the fall to not put on your sweater too quickly, but to make sure and wear it in the spring until it is really warm. The idea is to allow your body to get used to the cold weather gradually in the Fall, but in the Spring your Qi (energy) is not as strong, so you protect it longer.

The main herb used to build up the immune system is astragalus. It is available at health food stores and may be taken for months. In fact, people who have a tendency to get colds in the winter, may start a few weeks before the cooler weather and continue through spring. Traditionally, it is not used during a cold, but preventatively.

It is helpful to keep cold wind off your neck and back and keep your feet warm and dry.

Keeping your mental-emotional state healthy is very important. Worry and stress can use energy your body needs to keep well. People with happy relationships seem to get colds less frequently.

If you start to get that little tickle in the back of your throat or a sniffle, you can start with treating it homeopathically. Cold Calm is a homeopathic remedy for a variety of symptoms and is nice to have on hand. Avoid loud flavors in your mouth like mint around the time you use a homeopathic remedy.

One of the main Chinese herbal formulas for colds and flu is Yin Qiao. Since it is an herbal remedy, there is an unknown potential to interact with Western drugs if you are taking any.

Other remedies include drinking something hot, like cutting up scallions, placing in a cup and pouring boiling water over them. Let this steep for about 5 minutes and drink. You could do the same with fresh ginger, but remove the grated pieces before you drink. Drink as much as you like.

Drinking lots of fluids keeps your secretions thin. Water is better than beverages with caffeine or sugar. Garlic, pepper and onions also help to thin the secretions. A bowl of hot soup with those ingredients may help a lot.

You could also take a warm shower or bath, dry off and then get in the bed under blankets and sweat. You may feel better in the morning. Don't try this if you are pregnant or have any other problems with heat.

Normal saline rinse is made with 1 cup of warm water, ¼ teaspoon of salt and a pinch of baking soda. One way to use it is to hold one nostril closed while you snort it up the other side. Continue until you have a little salty taste in the back of your throat. Use on both sides and blow gently. This helps wash away the secretions and clear your nose and sinuses.

When you are sick, it is nice to take time off, relax, stay warm and take care of yourself. Hopefully, you will feel better quickly.