



## PREVENTING AND TREATING THE FLU

### What is the Flu?

Influenza is a virus that typically begins to appear in the fall and then recedes as the winter progresses (November until March). The virus is spread from person to person by sneezing, coughing and touching. Since the virus can last for a short time on objects, you can frequently become infected by touching something contaminated with the virus and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

### How do I know if I have the Flu?

While many of the symptoms for influenza are similar to those of a simple cold, the flu is more severe and lasts longer than a cold. Influenza usually begins with a headache, chills and a cough. These symptoms are followed by general body aches, a high fever, and sometimes vomiting, that may last for three to four days. Cold symptoms -- runny nose, sneezing, a sore throat -- then appear. Recovery happens in about a week. The flu's most telling characteristic is profound weakness and fatigue- some feel exhausted and "not themselves" for as long as three to four weeks after a bout with the flu.

The flu can produce complications like bacterial pneumonia, middle ear and sinus infections.

### How do I avoid the Flu?

The best ways to avoid getting the flu are to wash hands frequently, clean items that may be shared amongst children, and avoid people who may have the flu (though people can be contagious before showing symptoms). You may also want to consider a flu shot. Every year, the World Health Organization predicts which strains of the virus are most likely to be circulating in the next year, allowing pharmaceutical companies to develop vaccines that will provide the best immunity against these strains. Some years they get it right, but in other years, a new strain emerges that the vaccine does not protect against. Hence, the effectiveness of the vaccine will change from year to year. Generally speaking, the flu vaccine prevents the flu and its complications anywhere from 40-90% of the time.

### How is the Flu treated?

The most important thing in treating children or adults with the flu is to encourage plenty of rest and lots of fluids, including chicken soup or vegetable/miso broth (just what your mother always told you!). Salt water gargles and gargling with lavender tea can also be quite helpful. There are also several supplements that can minimize the effects of the flu. These supplement therapies are most effective when initiated at the first signs or symptoms of the flu. With the exception of the Vitamin A, they should also be continued for several days after symptoms subside. If you suspect you have the flu, it is best to consult a practitioner who can individualize the recommended herbs/supplements.

1) **Oscillococcinum**- A homeopathic remedy that has been shown to be effective and is FDA regulated. Each small vial contains sugar pellets that are most effective if allowed to dissolve under the tongue. Although the packaging says to take an entire vial per dose, you only need a typical homeopathic dose (5-10 pellets) per serving. This dose can also be taken once weekly for flu prevention. Small children can chew the pellets if necessary or they can be dissolved and administered in a dropper for younger children/infants. As with any homeopathic remedy, Oscillococcinum is most effective when given away from food, herbs, or strong flavors like mint or cinnamon.

2) **Probiotics** – A blend of beneficial bacteria in supplement form has been shown to help prevent and also treat the flu. Adults should take a good quality blend at a dose of about 30-40 billion units daily and for children about 15-20 billion daily. These doses can be used daily through the flu season and definitely through a flu illness. A probiotic blend can be purchased at Family to Family that is appropriate for both children (1/2 capsule daily) and adults (1 capsule daily).

3) **Vitamin D** – has been shown to help prevent the flu, lessen the duration of the flu illness and also to prevent recurrent colds through the winter months. For Adults use 5,000-10,000IU daily throughout illness and for children use 1,000-2,000IU daily through illness. For prevention, Vitamin D can be taken at a dose of 2-4000IU daily for adults and 400-1000IU daily for children, depending on their age (consult with your doctor for specific recommendations). Liquid Vitamin D can be purchased from Family to Family and is dosed at 1,000IU per drop.

4) **Vitamin A**- *High doses of Vitamin A should not be used for more than 3 days in a row.* Vitamin A should be administered twice a day for 2-3 days. Dosage: for children under 6 months of age, a serving size is 5,000 IU; for children 6-24 months old, a serving size is 10,000 IU; for children 2-4 years old, a serving size is 20,000 IU; for children 5-7 years old, a serving size is 30,000 IU; for children 7-14 years old, a serving size is 50,000 IU; and for people 15 years and older, a serving size is 75,000 IU. These doses are to be used twice a day for 2 -3days only. There are both liquid drops and capsules available. Do not use these amounts as a daily preventative. High dose Vitamin A should NOT be used in pregnancy.

5) **Vitamin C**- Ester or Buffered C are the preferred forms of Vitamin C. Dosage: for adults, take 1,000-2,000mg three times a day. You can increase this even further up to bowel tolerance. Higher doses such as these can lead to loose stools so decrease the dose if this occurs. Children up to 5 years of age, give 1000mg per year of age (divided into 3 or 4 doses) daily; for older children and adults, give as much Vitamin C as possible so long as the stools do not become loose. For daily prevention, 250mg twice a day for smaller children (under 5), and 500mg twice a day for older children and adults can be taken.

6) **Zinc** – Common brands of Zinc Gluconate include *Cold Eeze* and *Zicam*. Dosage: for children under 1 year of age, give 10-15mg (divided into 2 or 3 doses) a day; children between 1 and 3 years of age, give 20-30 mg (divided in 2 or 3 doses) a day; older children may receive 50mg (divided in 2 or 3 doses) a day; and adults can take 75-100 mg (divided in 2 or 3 doses) a day. Zinc can also be taken as a daily preventive: 5-10 mg per day for younger children and up to 20mg per day for adults.

7) **Echinacea** – An herb that is stimulatory to the immune system. Dosage: for children use alcohol free extracts of Echinacea. For children less than 3 months of age, use 5 drops 4 times a day; for children 3-6 months of age, use 10 drops 4 times a day; for children age 1-2 yrs, use 1 ml 3 times daily; for children ages 3 and above use 1-2 ml 3-4 times daily; for adults, use 1-2 droppers full of Echinacea 4-6 times a day or follow label instructions. Echinacea should *not* be used as a daily preventative at these doses.

8) **Elderberry** - An herb that appears to have direct anti-influenza viral activity. Children as young as 6 months of age can use this (although some people have used the product in younger children). It can be purchased in many forms including liquid glycerates, lozenges, teas and is often combined with other immune support herbs. Use according to package directions.

9) **Silver Hydrosols/Nano-silver** (i.e. “Sovereign Silver”) - Purified silver is a potent antimicrobial and has been shown to neutralize the flu virus. It should be taken according to directions and on an empty stomach and held under the tongue for 30 seconds before swallowing. If also taking probiotics (which you should be), then take the silver between meals and your probiotic with meals. Silver hydrosol products can be purchased online and at some health food stores.

10) **Lavender tea gargle** – a great gargle to soothe sore throats. To make a lavender infusion: steep 1 tsp lavender flowers in one cup of boiled water. To do this, boil a cup of water , take off the burner and add 1 tsp of the flowers and cover and let steep for 10 minutes. Then strain and gargle after cooled some.

11) **Saline nasal lavage** - Washing the nasal passageways and sinuses with a saline solution is a great way to keep viruses from taking hold in the respiratory tract and for keeping the nasal passageway clear so a sinus infection or ear infection can be prevented or treated when congestion is present. Our favorite method is with “Nasaline,” a syringe system for administering the solution, although the “Neti-pot” is the most well known device. The saline solution can be purchased from health food stores and will often come buffered to prevent burning. You can make your own solution at home using ½ tsp salt to 1 cup water. A few drops of grapefruit seed extract can also be added to the solution for added antibacterial benefit. Use the lavage system once daily for prevention and increase to 2-3 times daily when sick.

*Please be aware that these therapies have not been evaluated in large, multi-centered studies. One must always weigh the risks and benefits of each therapy on an individualized basis. Please contact our office if you have any questions or if any issues arise. Also be aware that no preparations with honey should be given to any child less than 1 year old.*

### **The Seasonal Flu Vaccine**

Some of our families choose to get the yearly flu vaccine, while others do not. This is an individual decision and the information provided here is aimed to help guide families in making the best decision for them.

There are two types of vaccines that protect against the seasonal flu. Each contains three strains of the influenza virus (selected annually based on predictions about which strains will be prevalent). The "**flu shot**" is an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is injected, usually in the arm. **FluMist**, is an activated vaccine (containing weakened live viruses) and is administered by nasal sprayer. Because FluMist contains a live virus vaccine, it has a more limited scope and can only be administered to people from age 2-49 who are not pregnant, have no history of chronic illness and are not caring for anyone who is severely immunosuppressed. The FluMist vaccine also is less effective than is the flu shot at preventing the flu.

Side effects from the flu vaccine may include a runny nose, headache, wheezing, vomiting, muscle aches, and fever in children, or a runny nose, headache, sore throat, and cough in adults.

### Who Should Get the Seasonal Flu Vaccine?

The CDC recommends the flu vaccine for the following populations:

- Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday
- Pregnant women
- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu including: health care workers, household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu, household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age

The CDC recommends that the following populations *should not* receive the flu vaccine:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past
- People who developed Guillain-Barre Syndrome within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously
- Children less than 6 months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved for use in this age group)
- People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait to get vaccinated until their symptoms lessen

### Which Flu Vaccine Should I Get?

Family to Family recommends that you choose a vaccine that has no thimerosal (mercury). The location administering the vaccine will be able to tell you the ingredients if you ask. In general multi-dose vials do contain thimerosal as a preservative whereas single dose vials do not.

### Where Can I Get the Flu Vaccine?

The Flu Vaccine is available at a variety of locations:

- Buncombe County Health Department
- Various pharmacies
- Most medical clinics

### References and sources for further reading

1. [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
2. <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-flu.pdf>

3. <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-flulive.pdf>

<b>Supplements We Carry at Family to Family</b>
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The following supplements are sold at Family to Family, but are also available at your local health food store. You can compare prices at Greenlife, Earthfare, Nature's Pharmacy, etc.:

- **Oscillococcinum** ~ \$18.00 (6 vials, multiple doses in each vial)
- **Custom Probiotics** ~ \$39.00 (90 pills, three month supply)
- **Pure Encapsulations Vitamin D 3** ~ \$19.00 (800 drops, 1000IU per drop)
- **Echinacea/Goldenseal Supreme** ~ \$9.00 (\_\_oz)
- **Nasaline** ~ Nasal rinsing system ~ \$18.00
- **Sambucus Immune Sysam Lozenges** ~ \$14.00
- **Black Elderberry** ~ by Herb Pharm ~ \$11.00
- **Quick Defense** ~ by GAIA Herbs, a blend of scientifically-researched Echinacea with antioxidant rich traditional herbs that delivers powerful support for the body's response to challenges that trigger our immune response ~ \$20.00
- **Wet Cough Syrup** ~ by GAIA Herbs, is high in saponin-containing plants (licorice, wild cherry, elecampane) which act as expectorants helping the body to move mucous out of the lungs ~ \$9.00 for 1 oz, \$17.00 for 2 oz.
- **Dry Cough Syrup** ~ by GAIA Herbs, uses mucilage containing plants (plantain, mullein, Irish moss, marshmallow) to work on the respiratory system in several ways to reduce cough ~ \$9.00 for 1 oz, \$17.00 for 2 oz.
- **Biocidin Throat Spray** ~ \$16.00
- **Ear Drops** ~ by GAIA's Children ~ \$7.00
- **Kids Echinacea Goldenseal** ~ \$9.00 for 1 oz, \$17.00 for 2 oz.
- **Echinacea/Astragalus** ~ by Herbs for Kids ~ \$17.00
- **Echinacea/Eyebright** ~ by Herbs for Kids ~ \$17.00