

Six Simple Symptom Soothers



by Ronni Wilde,
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Special Projects



Spring may be on its way, but those nasty bugs that make us sick are still very much alive and well. The best way to soothe cold and flu symptoms is to not get sick in the first place, of course. But, despite our best efforts to stay well, we all get hit with illness at some point. When that happens, there are home remedies that can help us soldier through.

"Prior to recommending any treatments, I first establish the diagnosis during a physical exam in my office," said Dr. Laurie Grisez, a naturopathic

doctor at Blue Star Naturopathic Clinic in Bend. "Once I know the patient has a cold or flu, treatment is individualized for each patient's symptoms."

Here are a few ideas that Grisez and others recommend to help ease symptoms of cold and flu.



Homemade Tea Blends

"I make various tea blends specific to an individual's symptoms," said Grisez. "A general immune support tea I recommend includes elderflower, elderberry, rosehips, lemon balm, cleavers and mint."

Hot liquids can relieve nasal congestion, prevent dehydration and soothe inflamed membranes that line the nose and throat. Hot tea can be made by boiling fresh herbs using a strainer, or with readymade teabags. Green and Echinacea teas are recommended by Livestrong.com for fighting viruses, and licorice root and slippery elm teas are soothing to sore throats. A mixture of mint or licorice tea, honey or agave and fresh-squeezed lemon is a popular cold and sore throat blend and it tastes good too.

Remember that herbs can have interactions with certain medications and other herbs, so it's a good idea to check with your doctor before drinking herbal tea.

Gargling

WebMd.com recommends gargling to moisten a sore throat and bring temporary relief. Gargle with half a teaspoon of salt dissolved in 8 ounces of warm water four times daily.

To reduce a tickle in the throat, WebMd.com suggests an astringent gargle, which can be made using



a tea that contains tannin, or a thick gargle made with honey or honey and apple cider vinegar. A tablespoon of raspberry leaves can be used for the tea gargle, or lemon juice can be added to 2 cups of hot water. For the thicker gargle, stir in one teaspoon of honey, and let the mixture cool to room temperature prior to gargling with it.



Steam Inhalation

Grisez recommends herbal steaming methods to deliver the medicinal qualities of herbs and essential oils directly to the respiratory tract. These can hydrate, warm and decongest the mucus membranes of the nose, sinuses and throat, she said, and can be used to help fight infection and inflammation in these areas and the lungs.

The three steaming options she recommends — tenting, using a mug or taking a bath — include the use of essential oils (she suggests eucalyptus, thyme, oregano and rosemary). With the tent method, boil 2-3 cups of water and remove it from heat. Add 3-5 drops of essential oil, and position yourself so that your head is above the container of water, no closer than 9 inches. Drape a towel over your head and the container, forming a tent. Inhale the vapor with slow, deep breaths for 5-10 minutes. When using a mug, fill a mug half full of boiling water, and add 1-2 drops of essential oils. Use your hands to form a cup over the nose and mug

to enclose the vapors. Inhale the vapors for 3-5 minutes. For the bath method, draw a hot bath, keeping the door closed to trap steam. Add 10 drops of essential oil to the bath and swirl the water to mix. Soak for 15-30 minutes taking slow, full, deep breaths.

Another option for reaping the benefits of moisture and oils is by using a vaporizer, or even a cool mist humidifier.

Apply Hot or Cold Packs Around Congested Sinuses

Both hot and cold temperatures can help relieve sinus congestion, according to WebMd.com. Reusable hot or cold packs can be purchased at a drugstore, or can be made at home. Heat can be applied by taking a damp washcloth and heating it for 55 seconds in a microwave (be sure to test the temperature first to make sure it's not too hot). To apply a cold pack to sinuses, a small bag of frozen peas works well.



Topical Rub on Chest and/or Feet

A topical cough suppressant/nasal decongestant/analgesic rub such as Vicks VapoRub can be spread onto the chest, neck and back and even the feet to help soothe coughing and clear congestion. While many swear by using the balm on the feet with socks, parents.com suggests that for maximum effectiveness, rubbing it on the chest is best because the vapors have less distance to travel to be inhaled. The site recommends spreading the rub onto the chest



and then applying a warm towel over it for comfort and soothing. Use caution when applying these rubs to children, however, as the camphor they contain can cause seizures or other serious side effects if ingested. Always keep the rub away from a child's face, including directly under the nostrils, and only use it on children over the age of 2.

Soup

When colds and flu strike, there's nothing like a soothing bowl of soup to make you feel cozy and better. Chicken noodle soup has long been a home remedy favorite for colds and flu, and though homemade is best, grocery store deli counters often have a soup bar with chicken noodle, and of course there are many canned varieties.



Dr. Bill Mitchell's Immune Support Soup

This is a homemade soup recipe recommended by Grisez that can be part of a regular diet or when the immune system needs a boost.

Ingredients:

- 1 quart chicken broth (or substitute mushroom or miso broth)
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed and chopped (or more to taste)
- 1 carrot, grated
- 4 fresh Shiitake mushrooms, sliced (or more to taste)
- 1 tbsp. ginger root, grated (or more to taste)
- 1 fresh lemon, juiced
- 3 tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped



Method:

Bring the broth, onion, garlic, carrot, mushrooms and ginger root to a slow boil. Reduce heat and simmer on low, covered, for 15 minutes. Remove from heat; add the lemon juice and parsley. Cover and steep, off the heat, for 5 minutes.

Notes: For a 5-serving batch, up to 10 cloves of garlic, 8 Shiitake mushrooms and 3 tablespoons of ginger can be used, depending on preferences. An option to retain even more of the immune-building properties is to start the soup with half the total garlic desired; then crush the remaining cloves, adding them with the lemon juice at the end.

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