

Chatting with The Good Dr. Laura Shook
November 2008

Burr it was cold this morning. It seems that our gentle summer has skipped right into fall. It's time to dig out the humidifier and make sure it works, stock the cupboard with tissue, the freezer with healing broths and find the thermometer.. I don't know about you but standing in line at the market, red nosed and chest rattling, bottles, boxes and cans clutched in my feverish hands is NOT my favorite way to deal with the flu.

So, I will run a humidifier in my home and office. The extra moisture will keep my sinuses hydrated maximizing their natural defenses. I know that dry sinuses are more susceptible to viral and bacterial attack. When a humidifier is not near, I will carry a bottle of nasal saline and use it frequently especially when in a building or airplane where the air is constantly re-circulated. I will remember that my hands are a contaminated surface. I will wash them frequently and avoid touching my eyes or nose. I know the cooling weather will take the edge off my thirst so I will take extra care to keep a warm cup of herbal tea near buy (Peppermint, chamomile, ginger and green teas). And lastly, I will use a clean handkerchief, bit of rag or a disposable tissue when I do sneeze or cough and remember that if I'm sneezing and coughing I may need to pay more attention to my humidifier, nasal saline and warm herbal teas.

The November-December 2008 Vegetarian times has a wonderful article discussing foods that fight colds and flu.

Garlic: Allicin, the chemical within garlic that provides the antiviral, antibacterial and antifungal effects. Chop, dice or crush garlic to activate the allicins. Allowing the crushed garlic to sit for 10 minuets will maximize the strength of the allicins before cooking.

Onion: Contain allicins (see garlic), Flavonols which have been shown to inhibit three common stains of influenza and Sulfur which has anti-inflammatory properties

Honey: A study at Penn State University College of Medicine found honey to be an effective cough suppressant. Use with caution if you have any issues with blood sugar. Babies under 1year should not eat honey.

Cayenne: Add this fiery spice to soup or tea for relief of sore throat. The heat of this spice will immediately cause the mouth, throat, and nasal passages to release a watery fluid which will thin mucus discharge and help to break up congestion. Do not give cayenne to children under 2 years old.

Ginger: Gingerols, shogaols and pheonals, which give ginger its zing and bite, also reduces inflammation and reduces pain without the stomach irritation frequently linked to aspirin and ibuprofen. Ginger also helps the body sweat and is a diuretic. Cook with fresh ginger, candied ginger or brew ginger tea. To make ginger tea place 2 tablespoons of grated ginger in a mug, add boiling water, steep 5 minutes and strain out ginger before drinking. I, personally, would add some agave nectar or a little honey to that powerful cup of ginger tea. Do not give ginger to children under 2 years old.

So get out your own humidifier and stock the cupboards with ginger and garlic. Have a wonderful Thanks Giving. Be happy and be well.

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