



AMERICAN
BOTANICAL
COUNCIL

Post Office Box 144345
Austin, Texas 78714-4345
Phone 512/926-4900
Fax 512/926-2345
Email: abc@herbalgram.org
www.herbalgram.org

Mark Blumenthal
Editor

Wayne Silverman, PhD
Underwriting Coordinator

Betsy Levy
Densie Webb, PhD
Leela Devi, MSN, RN
Summary Writers

Karen Newton
Database Manager

Susan McFarland
Kara Dinda, MS
Co-coordinators

Dawnelle Malone
Research Assistant

The American Botanical Council provides this summary and the enclosed article as an educational service. By providing this article, ABC does not warrant that the data is accurate and correct, nor does distribution of the enclosed article constitute any endorsement of the information contained or of the views of the authors.

ABC does not authorize the copying or use of the original articles. Reproduction of the summaries is allowed on a limited basis for students, colleagues, employees and/or customers. Other uses and distribution require prior approval.

HERBCLIP

FILE: •Colds
• Flues
• Herbal Therapies

DATE: January 6, 1997

HC 010672

RE: Herbs for Colds & Flu

Meserole, Lisa, and Eric Yarnell. Flu Season: Herbal Tonics From Nature's Pharmacy. *Alternative & Complementary Therapies*, September/October 1996, pp. 316-320.

This article focuses on herbal medicines useful in the prevention and treatment of common, seasonal viral infections of the upper respiratory tract, collectively known as the "flu." Symptoms of the flu include runny nose, sore throat, cough, fever, headache, muscle ache, and fatigue. Unlike drugs used to treat the flu, herbs, because of their complex chemical composition, are less susceptible to the development of microbial resistance. Herbs can also be used to boost the body's own immune response to the flue.

Prevention is the primary goal, and proper nutrition is a fundamental base upon which to add the use of tonic and therapeutic herbs. The following types of herbs have a history of traditional use in the prevention and treatment of flu: digestive alteratives, sudorifics or diaphoretics (plants that enhance sweating), vitamin-rich plants, and plants high in immunomodulating polysaccharides. Dandelion root (*Taraxacum officinale*) is a digestive alterative, and can help correct constipation. Although no known studies exist on the effects of an emptied colon on disease resistance, it is well-known in herbal traditions and is theoretically plausible. Diaphoretics, such as the flowers of German chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), Roman chamomile (*Anthemis nobilis*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*) can help prevent flu by stimulating mild fever which has a beneficial effect on the immune system. Diaphoretic cooking spices include cayenne pepper and jalapeños (*Capsicum* spp.), mustard seed (*Brassica nigra*), ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), and horseradish (*Cochlearia armoracia*). Herbs rich in vitamin C include rose hips (*Rosa canina*) and black currant berries (*Ribes nigrum*) can also be helpful as preventives and tonics during flu season.

Once you have the flu, there are many herbs that can be used therapeutically. Demulcent herbs such as marshmallow (*Althea officinalis*) can reduce inflammation and irritation, and soothe mucous membranes of the throat, bronchi, and the sinuses. Relaxing expectorants such as mullein (*Verbascum*

thapsus) and wild cherry (*Prunus serotina*) can be used to soothe bronchial spasm and loosen mucous secretions. Elder flower and sage (*Salvia officinalis*) can be used as astringents for the nose, sinuses, throat, and mouth. Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*) is valuable as an antispasmodic, as well as for the antimicrobial and antifungal properties of its volatile oils. The polysaccharides in licorice root (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) and echinacea (*Echinacea* spp.) exert immunomodulating effects, and can be helpful for fighting infection. Other choices are *Lomatium dissectum*, propolis, and wild indigo (*Baptisia tinctoria*), or tea made from cinnamon (*Cinnamomum* spp.), ginger, and cardamom (*Elletara cardamomum*).