6 Ways to Prepare for a Rough Flu Season

Flu season is shaping up to be brutal this year, with many areas reporting influenza cases a month ahead of schedule. Australia, who experiences flu season before the United States and Europe, suffered from a particularly rough season with almost twice as many deaths and more than twice the number of infections in comparison to the previous season. In response the flu vaccine gospel is already being pushed harder than usual, but that's not going to help much.

Back in September, Dr. Vicky Sheppeard, director of communicable diseases at New South Wales Health in Australia indicated that "the four flu strains in the vaccine are well-matched to circulating viruses…" It turns out that a good match doesn't really guarantee anything, as the New England Journal of Medicine reports that early vaccine effectiveness estimates found that the vaccine was only ten percent effective in Australia. This is a far cry from the initial overall estimates of 42% effectiveness or the 34% predicted for H3N2, the dominant flu strain in Australia that's notoriously difficult to match. Flu shots for the United States are essentially the same as the one used in Australia.

How to Win at the Flu Season

None of the debate about the flu shot changes the fact that the flu season is here (early), and if Australia is any indicator, it's going to suck. It doesn't have to. You've got a heads-up, so use this time to prep. Here are the most effective strategies for avoiding or mitigating the flu this season.

Related: Influenza Vaccine – A Comprehensive Overview of the

Potential Dangers and Effectiveness of the Flu Shot

Load Up On Vitamins

Winter is not the best season for vitamin D, but it is critical for flu prevention. A review of 25 studies that included more than 10,000 participants found that vitamin d reduces the likelihood of respiratory infections like the cold and flu. It can be difficult to get all of your vitamin d from diet alone, especially in winter. If you suspect vitamin d deficiency, supplementation has proven to be effective.

Related: *Foods with Vitamin D and Vitamin B12 for those with Multiple Sclerosis*

Vitamin C is also a critical part of preparing for flu season. One of the most powerful antioxidants available to us, it also boosts immune function. Vitamin C transporter molecules in the membranes of the immune cells actively pump the vitamin into the cells – especially in a stressful situation when the body is more likely to need vitamin C. While there are plenty of vitamin c supplements available, many of them are derived from corn and don't absorb well in the body. To get the full benefit of vitamin c, whole food sources like berries, colored peppers, broccoli, and dark leafy greens.

Related: *Homemade Vitamin C*

Gargle

It's not fun, but gargling apple cider vinegar, fire cider, or even salt water can inhibit harmful microbes trying to take up residency in the throat or sinuses. Some viruses are able to hang on, but that infection will likely be less severe. A fire cider has the added antioxidant benefits of hot peppers.

Related: Mother Earth Organic Root Cider

Hot and Cold

Get hot and sweaty! A fever happens when your body is fighting an infection, and treatments like hot baths, showers, and saunas can trick the body into behaving in that manner. Moving back and forth between hot and cold also provides flu relief, loosening congestion, improving circulation, and boosting the immune system. Always start with hot, and then switch to cold. Switching between very hot and very cold in the shower is the easiest method, but hydrotherapy can also be accomplished with a hot bath and a rubdown with a cold cloth. Also referred to as cold mitten friction, dip a washcloth in 50 to 60 degree water, and rub vigorously.

Related: *Hot & Cold Hydrotherapy*

Echinacea

In addition to the vitamins, there are plenty of natural remedies for flu prevention. One of the best known and verified of these is echinacea. Echinacea is most effective when it’s taken right before or at the very beginning of a developing case of the flu. Anti-inflammatory and antifungal, a good-quality echinacea tincture gives your mouth a fuzzy feeling, and the herb loses its effectiveness after ten days or so.

Related: Shillington’s Echinacea Plus

Hydrate

Dehydration makes the body more susceptible to harmful invaders, and many early flu symptoms like a runny nose and sweating can increase that. Water is the safe play here, but if you’re looking to improve your all-around health at the same time, reach for the cranberry lemonade. The vitamin c is a proven flu buster, and cranberry keeps the kidney processing things smoothly. Another comforting option is a loose leaf,

herbal tea. The tea provides a variation on the hot treatment, though it is important to choose an organic tea from a company you trust.

Related: *What's the Best Water for Detoxifying and For Drinking?*

Diet

If you do everything on this list, you'll likely be able to take on the flu quickly and effectively, but to keep your immune system in tip-top condition, diet comes first. Emerging research has continued to confirm that our microbiome determines how healthy we are. Beneficial bacteria like beneficial food, and feeding them the vegetables and fruit creates a positive cycle the reverberates throughout the entire body. The opposite is true of potentially harmful microbes and viruses like the flu. Refined sugars, refined grains, and processed foods fuel harmful bacteria and can lead to a stressed and overworked immune system, perfect for flu viruses to take advantage of. Check out this salad recipe to get some ideas for loading up on the veggies.

Related: *Detox Cheap and Easy Without Fasting – Recipes Included*

Always Be Prepared

The boy scout motto seems to be quoted often, but no one is applying it to our health. Then again, that's what the vaccine is supposed to do. According to experts, this year's flu vaccine is about as effective as going camping with a sheet instead and hoping it doesn't rain or get cold. Don't you want to be the person who actually prepared? It starts with diet.

Recommended: *My Supplements* & *Organic Cider Review* & *Bullet Proof Immune System*

Sources:

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