



## COLD AND FLU

**Echinacea** (Echinacea, various species). Echinacea is widely known to boost the immune system and should be taken during cold and flu season to prevent illness. There's much research, most of it German, to show that it strengthens the immune system against cold viruses and other germs. Echinacea root extracts contain antiviral activity that protects against influenza, and other viruses. In a study of 180 people with flu, one scientist found that 900 milligrams of an echinacea extract significantly reduced symptoms. With all of the products out there it's sometimes hard to know if you are getting a good quality product. One way to identify an effective Echinacea product is that shortly after ingesting a tea or tincture, you should get a tingly or slightly numb feeling on your tongue.

**Goldenseal** (*Hydrastis canadensis*). Goldenseal is a powerful broad spectrum antibiotic and it reportedly increases the blood supply to the spleen, an organ that's the staging area for the fighting cells of your immune system. The major healing component in goldenseal, berberine, activates special white blood cells (macrophages) that are responsible for destroying bacteria, fungi, viruses and tumor cells. Several related chemicals in the herb appear to help the berberine do its job.

**Citrus fruits and other foods containing vitamin C.** Many herbalists and physicians suggest taking 500 milligrams of vitamin C four times a day to relieve cold symptoms. If you can, try to get your vitamin C from fresh fruits and vegetables as opposed to pill form.

**Elderberry** (*Sambucus nigra*). This herb, both fruit and flowers, contains several compounds that are active against flu viruses, and can prevent the virus from invading respiratory tract cells.

**Ephedra** (*Ephedra sinica*). Also known as ma huang, ephedra is a powerful decongestant. It contains chemicals, ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, that open up the bronchial passages. Pseudoephedrine works so well that it is used in many over-the-counter decongestants.

*Along with its decongestant action, ephedra is also a powerful stimulant that can raise blood pressure and cause insomnia and 'jitters'. In fact, within the last few years, a number of people have died from abusing this herb when they overdosed in a misguided attempt to get high, and the Food and Drug Administration has taken measures to remove ephedrine supplements from the market. Because of ephedra's stimulant action and those unfortunate fatalities, this herb is controversial and should always be taken cautiously and under the supervision of a certified herbalist.*

**Licorice** (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) I drink licorice root tea when I have any type of cold or sore throat and get instant relief. It also contains antiviral compounds that induce the release of interferons, the body's own antiviral constituents

**Marsh mallow** (*Althaea officinalis*) and other mallows. Marsh mallow has been used for thousands of years as a soothing herb for cold-related cough, sore throat and other respiratory conditions. Marsh mallow roots contain a spongy material called mucilage that soothes inflamed mucous membranes. Commission E endorses marsh mallow, hollyhock and other mallows for cough and sore throat.

**Mullein** (*Verbascum thapsus*). A tea made with mullein flowers provides throat-soothing mucilage and also has an expectorant effect. The plant reportedly contains compounds that inhibit flu viruses. I have had good success with mullein leaf teas as well.

**Slippery elm** (*Ulmus rubra*). Slippery elm is a very effective throat and respiratory soother. Slippery elm was a medical mainstay in this country for more than 150 years and was long listed in the nation's official guides to therapeutics.