

### *Cold Season Natural Remedies*

The common cold generally involves a runny nose, nasal congestion, and sneezing. You may also have a sore throat, cough, headache, or other symptoms. Over 200 viruses can cause a cold. Treatment with over-the-counter cold remedies may help ease your symptoms. These won't actually shorten the length of a cold, but can help you feel better. They fall into 4 general groups: antihistamines, decongestants, expectorants and cough suppressants. The antihistamines like Benadryl and Claritin help to dry out nasal passages. Decongestants, like Sudafed, help to clear nasal passages. Expectorants like guaifenesin (Mucinex) help to thin out the mucus to make it easier to get rid out. The cough suppressants, like dextromethorphan (Robitussin) or the stronger narcotic, codeine, can help to stop the cough, but that also inhibits the body's natural clearing mechanisms. None of these products has been shown to speed the course of the cold, but can help you to live with it.

There are a number of good natural remedies. Of course, nothing beats drinking plenty of fluids, rest, and eating a diet full of fruits and vegetables, especially during a cold. Here are some proven remedies:

- **Steam Inhalation Therapy:** It has been proven to help especially with congestion by warming the nasal and bronchial passages, hydrating the thickened mucus, and dilating blood vessels to help clear out the debris left behind from the work of your immune system. There are a number of combinations to use. Dr Andrew Weil suggests eucalyptus and sage. I like peppermint, oregano and lemon. Here's how to do it. Use your spaghetti pot, out about 2 inches of water in, and put the mixture of herbs, such as the 2-3 peppermint tea bags, a teaspoon of oregano, and a squirt of lemon juice. Let that mixture boil for about 5 minutes, then remove it from the stove and place it on your kitchen table. Then, using a large towel as a tent, cover yourself and the pot, and directly breathe in the vapors. In your nose and out your mouth, or vice-versa, with deep breaths, for about 15 minutes. Position your face high enough so you don't burn from the steam, but as close as you can tolerate. Do this twice a day when you have the congestion.
- **Eucalyptus** (*Eucalyptus globulus*) and sage (*Salvia officinalis*): Decongestant and antibacterial. Inhaling steam that contains eucalyptus or sage is an excellent remedy for respiratory problems, including chest congestion, bronchitis, bronchial cough and sinusitis. The aromatic oils from eucalyptus and sage leaves help halt bacterial growth and reduce the risk of getting secondary infections. Do the steam routine at least twice a day. As a variation, try several crushed garlic cloves in the water. If you have a sore throat, drink sage tea.
- **Echinacea** (*Echinacea purpurea*): Antibiotic, antiviral and immune-enhancer. This native American plant is a fine first-line treatment for colds and flu. At the first sign of trouble, begin taking echinacea and continue until the illness runs its course. Children under 10 can take half the adult dosage.
- **Ginger** (*Zingiber officinale*): Warming, anti-inflammatory and anti-nauseant. Ginger root tea helps relieve head and chest congestion while staving off chills. Grate a one-inch piece of peeled ginger root. Place it in a pot with two cups of water, bring to a boil, lower heat and simmer for five minutes. Add 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper and simmer one minute more. Remove from heat. Add two tablespoons fresh lemon juice, one or two cloves of mashed garlic and honey to taste. Let cool slightly, and strain if you wish.
- **Mullein** (*Verbascum thapsus*): Expectorant, antitussive. Tincture of mullein relieves chest congestion and dry, bronchial coughs. Mullein oil can be used to treat ear infections.
- **Tiger Balm:** This Chinese herbal remedy, based on camphor and menthol, is great for easing bronchial congestion. The camphor and menthol have a warming action that brings more blood to the area. Just rub Tiger Balm on the chest and cover with a warm towel.