

NATURAL WAYS TO PREVENT FLU

There has been much attention and concern in the media lately over the H1N1 flu virus outbreak in Ahousaht and in other communities. Naturopathic doctors focus on boosting the body's natural immune system to prevent the flu.

Keeping the immune system healthy through proper diet, supplementation, sleep, stress reduction, and exercise is the best way to prevent getting sick. Fruits and vegetables are high in antioxidants which protect the body against infection. It is recommended to have ten servings a day of fruits and vegetables. If eating this high quantity of fruits and vegetables seems difficult, try a greens drink. My favourite greens drink is the minty *Greens First* by Doctors for Nutrition. It has 10 servings of fruits and vegetables per serving and is sweetened with stevia instead of artificial flavourings. This product is only available through naturopathic doctors. Other greens drinks you can find at health food stores include *Greens Plus*, and Prairie Naturals *Greens Drink*. Avoid foods such as sugar (which is in most packaged/preserved foods, pop, candy bars, most juices, cereals), refined foods (white bread, white pasta, white rice), food additives (MSG), fried foods, and trans-fats (hydrogenated vegetable oils). In order to avoid these "evils", you need to shop at the periphery of the grocery stores only, and avoid all packaged/preserved foods. Buy only whole grain breads, brown rice and pastas, veggies and fruit, eggs, meat, and fish.

To keep your immune system healthy, you need to boost your white blood cells. These are the cells responsible for your immunity. The three big culprits - sugar, lack of sleep, and stress (physical, mental, and emotional) - all deplete your white blood cell count. Try to get 8-10 hours sleep a night. Avoid stress as much as possible. Try exercise, deep breathing, acupuncture, and yoga to keep stress levels to a minimum.

Vitamins and herbs that are helpful for the immune system include vitamin C, cod liver oil, probiotics, echinacea, oil of oregano, garlic, and reishi mushrooms. Most North Americans are deficient in vitamin D due to the lack of sunlight. Supplementing with 1000-2000 IU of Vitamin D a day can help boost your immunity. *Carlson's Cod Liver Oil* contains 1000 IU of Vitamin D per tablespoon.

For those who are immune-compromised (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, HIV, cancer) or anyone who is prone to infections, naturopathic doctors provide IV vitamin injections containing high doses of vitamins called the *Myers Cocktail*. These injections can help boost immunity and energy levels.

Instead of worrying and stressing about getting the flu this year, focus on boosting your immune system naturally!