

17 Steps To Combat
Colds & Flu
*Using Science-Backed
Natural Remedies*

by

Dr Michael Klein

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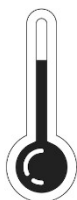
First edition

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1. Introduction

Colds and influenza (“flu”) are some of the most common viral illnesses, affecting millions of people each year. A common cold, typically caused by rhinoviruses, tends to be mild—runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, and cough. The flu, caused by influenza viruses, is a different beast altogether.



It comes on fast and hard, often with a sudden fever, chills, intense body aches, headache, and overwhelming fatigue. While most people recover from a cold in about a week and from flu in one to two weeks, these illnesses can throw life off track, keeping adults away from work and children home from school. In fact, the average adult catches **two to three colds per year** (and children even more), making them a leading cause of missed days and lost productivity.

Flu, though less frequent, can be much more severe, especially for vulnerable groups like young children, the elderly, pregnant women, or individuals with chronic conditions. Unlike the common cold, influenza can sometimes lead to **serious**

complications such as pneumonia or hospitalization, particularly in high-risk populations.

Why I Wrote This Guide

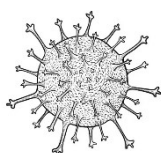
I am a **Medical Doctor** with over **20 years of experience** in pharmaceutical research across three continents—Africa, Asia, and Australia. Over the years, I have served on the African, Asian, and European boards of three multinational pharmaceutical companies and spent much of my career analyzing vast amounts of data to extract **high-value information** from the constant flood of new medical studies. I have seen firsthand the **benefits and limitations of modern medicine**. While pharmaceuticals play a crucial role in healthcare, I also recognize that for many families, the cost of sophisticated, complex medications is simply unaffordable. The reality is that not every illness requires an expensive prescription. Many common ailments, including colds and flu, can be effectively managed with **affordable, natural solutions** that have stood the test of time.

This book is part of a ten-book series aimed at **cash- and time-strapped families** looking for **fast, effective, and science-backed** solutions for common health problems. My goal is to simplify the overwhelming amount of peer-reviewed scientific

information available on natural remedies and present it in a way that is both easy-to-read and practical.

Why This Book Matters Post-COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic changed how we think about respiratory infections. It reminded us of **how**



fragile our health can be and how quickly viruses can spread. Many people became more aware of the **importance of immune resilience, hygiene, and natural ways to support recovery.** At the same time, the pandemic highlighted the **limits of modern medicine** when faced with widespread viral infections. Hospitals were overwhelmed, medications were sometimes scarce, and many people were forced to manage their symptoms at home.

In the post-pandemic world, people are more interested than ever in **preventative health strategies and at-home treatments** that can support the immune system. They want **natural, effective, and affordable solutions** that don't require expensive prescriptions or doctor visits for minor illnesses. This book was written with that in mind—to empower individuals and families with **science-backed, practical remedies** that can be used at home to help prevent and manage cold and flu symptoms.

The Problem with Conventional Treatments

Most over-the-counter (OTC) cold and flu medications don't cure the illness—they merely manage symptoms. Decongestants clear up stuffy noses for a while, pain relievers reduce fever and body aches, and cough syrups attempt to suppress relentless coughing. While these treatments can offer temporary relief, they often come with side effects such as drowsiness, dizziness, and dry mouth. Worse still, they can be *costly*, especially for families who experience frequent seasonal illnesses.

Each year, billions of dollars are spent on cold and flu medications, doctor visits, and prescription treatments¹. Yet, **there is no pharmaceutical cure for the common cold**. Antibiotics, despite their widespread misuse, do absolutely nothing against viruses. Antiviral medications for flu, like oseltamivir (Tamiflu), can be helpful in some cases but are expensive and only modestly shorten the illness if taken early enough.

¹ Išerić E, Verster JC. The common cold: The need for an effective treatment amid the FDA discussion on oral phenylephrine. J Allergy Clin Immunol Glob. 2024 Aug 7;3(4):100318. doi: 10.1016/j.jacig.2024.100318. PMID: 39253103; PMCID: PMC11381861.

Why Natural Remedies Matter

In contrast, **natural remedies** offer a practical, budget-friendly, and often scientifically supported way to both **prevent** and **treat** cold and flu symptoms. Simple kitchen staples like **honey, salt, ginger, and garlic** have been used for generations to soothe symptoms and bolster immunity.



These remedies don't just mask discomfort—they **work with the body's natural defenses**, offering relief without the unwanted side effects of synthetic drugs.

For example, **honey** has been clinically proven to be as effective (if not better) than some commercial cough syrups in reducing nighttime cough in children². Warm saltwater gargles can soothe sore throats, while steam inhalation can naturally relieve congestion. Many of these time-honored remedies are not just old wives' tales—they are backed by science, making them a **safe and effective alternative** for families looking to reduce their reliance on pharmaceuticals.

² Oduwale O, Udoh EE, Oyo-Ita A, Meremikwu MM. *Honey for acute cough in children*. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2018 Apr 10;4(4):CD007094. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD007094.pub5. PMID: 29633783; PMCID: PMC6513626.

What You'll Learn in This Guide

This guide focuses on **natural, evidence-based remedies** to prevent and combat cold and flu symptoms at home. These remedies are generally accessible (often already in your pantry or easily purchased at low cost) and can be safely used by the whole family (with a few precautions noted).

You'll learn:

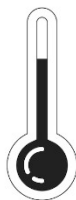
- **Preventative strategies** to boost your immunity and reduce your risk of getting sick.
- **17 specific steps**—practical remedies—to **relieve symptoms naturally** using Western herbal medicine and other well-researched approaches.
- **DIY recipes** for homemade treatments, including herbal syrups, teas, and soothing balms.
- **Lifestyle tips** to speed up recovery and prevent future infections.
- **Guidance on when to seek professional medical help**, so you know when home remedies are enough and when to call a doctor.

While this guide champions natural remedies, it is **not anti-medicine**. Modern medical advancements save

lives, and for severe cases of flu, complications like pneumonia, or high-risk individuals, professional medical care is essential. However, for everyday management of colds and mild flu symptoms, or as a **complement** to conventional treatment, natural remedies can be immensely beneficial.

This book is about **empowering you** with knowledge. It's about **giving you options**—safe, effective, and budget-friendly tools that you can use at home to take charge of your health. **By using these methods, you're not just treating symptoms—you're actively supporting your body's natural ability to heal.**

It's time to explore **how a few simple lifestyle tweaks and natural remedies** can help you fight off colds and flu **effectively and affordably**. Your journey to a healthier, more resilient immune system starts now. **Skip this section** if you are already running a fever jump into the 17 Steps.



2. Preventive Measures

The adage “*Prevention is better than cure*” certainly applies to colds and flu. Strengthening your body’s defenses and minimizing exposure to viruses can greatly reduce your risk of falling ill. Here are some lifestyle and dietary strategies for prevention:

- **Practice Good Hygiene:** Since cold and flu viruses spread via respiratory droplets and contaminated surfaces, basic hygiene is key. Most of the instructions you normalized during COVID apply. Wash your hands well and often with soap and water, especially after being in public places or touching shared surfaces. If soap and water aren’t available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your face (eyes, nose, mouth) with unwashed hands, as that’s a common entry point for viruses. Also, try to distance yourself from people who are actively coughing/sneezing, and cover your own coughs/sneezes with a tissue or your elbow to prevent spreading germs.
- **Boost Your Immune System with Nutrition:** A well-functioning immune system can fend off viruses more effectively, and nutrition plays a huge role in immunity.

Emphasize a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole foods to provide essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. In particular, ensure adequate intake of **Vitamin C and Zinc**, which are known immune-boosters. Vitamin C (found in citrus fruits, berries, kiwi, bell peppers, leafy greens, etc.) helps immune cells

function properly.

While taking extra vitamin C won't guarantee you won't catch a cold, some studies have found that



regular vitamin C intake can *shorten the duration* of colds³. It's best (and cheapest) to get vitamin C from fresh foods – for example, an orange or a cup of strawberries daily – but if needed you can use a supplement (~200 mg to 500 mg daily) during cold season. Be careful not to megadose extremely high amounts of vitamin C, as that can cause upset stomach or kidney stones. **Zinc** is another nutrient vital for immune response – good food sources include

³ Tiralongo E, Wee SS, Lea RA. Elderberry Supplementation Reduces Cold Duration and Symptoms in Air-Travellers: A Randomized, Double-Blind Placebo-Controlled Clinical Trial. *Nutrients*. 2016 Mar 24;8(4):182. doi: 10.3390/nu8040182. PMID: 27023596; PMCID: PMC4848651.

meat, poultry, seafood, beans, nuts, and seeds. Research shows zinc supplementation can reduce the incidence of infections in children and shorten cold durations in adults⁴. You might consider a multivitamin or eating zinc-rich foods regularly to ensure you're not deficient, especially during winter.

- **Include Immune-Boosting Foods/Herbs:**

Beyond vitamins, certain foods and herbs have specific antiviral or immune-modulating properties:

- **Garlic:** This pungent bulb is a powerhouse of compounds like allicin that have been shown to fight viruses and bacteria. A notable clinical trial found that people taking a daily garlic supplement had significantly fewer colds over 12 weeks than those taking a placebo (24 colds in the garlic group vs 65 in the placebo group)⁵. The garlic

⁴ Sazawal S, Black RE, Jalla S, Mazumdar S, Sinha A, Bhan MK. Zinc supplementation reduces the incidence of acute lower respiratory infections in infants and preschool children: a double-blind, controlled trial. *Pediatrics*. 1998 Jul;102(1 Pt 1):1-5. doi: 10.1542/peds.102.1.1. PMID: 9651405.

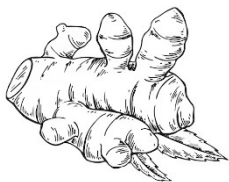
⁵ Josling P. Preventing the common cold with a garlic supplement: a double-blind, placebo-controlled survey. *Adv Ther*. 2001 Jul-Aug;18(4):189-93. doi: 10.1007/BF02850113. PMID: 11697022.

group also had far fewer days of illness overall. These results suggest garlic can help *prevent* colds or at least reduce how often you get sick. To get garlic's benefits, include fresh garlic in your cooking regularly – it's an easy, flavorful addition to soups, stews, stir-fries, etc. You can also eat a raw garlic clove (chopped finely, perhaps swallowed with honey or water) a few times a week during flu season if you tolerate it; crushing or chewing it releases the active compounds. If the taste is too strong, odorless garlic capsules are an option. Just be aware garlic can act as a mild blood thinner, so if you have a bleeding disorder or are on blood-thinning medication, check with a doctor. For most people, though, using garlic in food is very safe and affordable.

- **Ginger:** Ginger root has a long history of use for preventing and treating respiratory infections. It contains gingerols and other bioactive components that are anti-inflammatory

and may help fight viruses⁶. Ginger is

GINGER



also excellent for soothing a sore throat and reducing nausea (in case you have postnasal drip or an upset

stomach with flu). Incorporate ginger into your diet by drinking ginger tea (see steps below) or using fresh ginger in cooking. A little daily ginger – whether in a smoothie, a stir-fry, or a cup of tea – can contribute to overall immune resilience.

- **Elderberry:** Elderberries are the dark purple-black berries of the *Sambucus* plant. They are rich in antioxidants (anthocyanins) and have gained popularity as an immune supplement. Some research supports elderberry's effect against cold and flu viruses. For example, a meta-analysis concluded that elderberry supplementation

⁶ Rasheed N. *Ginger and its active constituents as therapeutic agents: Recent perspectives with molecular evidences*. Int J Health Sci (Qassim). 2020 Nov-Dec;14(6):1-3. PMID: 33192225; PMCID: PMC7644455.

substantially *reduces the duration and severity of upper respiratory symptoms*⁷. In one study, taking elderberry extract when coming down with the flu was found to shorten the illness by **about 3–4 days** compared to placebo. Elderberry appears to work by enhancing cytokine production and possibly preventing viruses from attaching to our cells. To use elderberry preventively, you can take a daily dose of elderberry syrup during peak cold/flu season or when you know you've been exposed to someone sick. Elderberry syrup (commercial or homemade – see DIY section) is safe for adults and children over 1 year (do not give to infants under 1 due to honey content in syrups). Always use a **reputable product** – raw elderberries should not be eaten as they can be toxic; they must be cooked/prepared properly.

⁷ Tiralongo E, Wee SS, Lea RA. *Elderberry Supplementation Reduces Cold Duration and Symptoms in Air-Travellers: A Randomized, Double-Blind Placebo-Controlled Clinical Trial. Nutrients*. 2016 Mar 24;8(4):182. doi: 10.3390/nu8040182. PMID: 27023596; PMCID: PMC4848651.

- **Probiotic Foods:** A healthy gut microbiome can influence your immune system's strength. Consuming probiotic-rich foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, or kimchi may help bolster your body's defense against infections.



Some studies have found that people who regularly consume

probiotics have fewer or milder upper respiratory infections, possibly because probiotics enhance gut-associated immunity. Even if the effect is moderate, yogurt with live cultures or fermented foods are nutritious additions to your diet and relatively low-cost.

- **Other Herbs and Supplements:** Echinacea (discussed in Step 1) can be taken intermittently during cold season to potentially reduce risk. Some people also use supplements like vitamin D (especially in winter when sun exposure is low) – vitamin D adequacy is important for immunity, and deficiency has been linked to higher risk of respiratory infections. If you

have low vitamin D levels or don't get much sunlight, talk to your doctor about supplementation, as maintaining a sufficient level might help prevent illnesses. Additionally, staying well-hydrated and eating a balanced diet ensures you're getting minor nutrients (like selenium, iron, etc.) that also play roles in immune function.

- **Healthy Lifestyle Habits:** Your everyday habits greatly influence your immune resilience:
 - **Sleep:** Prioritize regular, sufficient sleep nightly. Studies show that people who don't get enough sleep are far more likely to catch a cold when exposed to a virus. In one study, adults sleeping <7 hours were about **3 times more likely** to develop a cold than those sleeping 8+ hours⁸. When you're sleep-deprived, your body produces fewer infection-fighting antibodies and T-cells, making you an easier target for

⁸ Cohen S, Doyle WJ, Alper CM, Janicki-Deverts D, Turner RB. *Sleep habits and susceptibility to the common cold. Arch Intern Med.* 2009 Jan 12;169(1):62-7. doi: 10.1001/archinternmed.2008.505. PMID: 19139325; PMCID: PMC2629403.

viruses. Aim for 7–9 hours of quality sleep per night. Develop a relaxing bedtime routine and keep a consistent sleep schedule to improve your sleep quality, especially during cold and flu season.

- **Exercise:** Engage in regular moderate exercise (such as brisk walking, cycling, or swimming for 30 minutes a day). Moderate exercise boosts circulation and the activity of immune cells. Research suggests that people who exercise frequently have fewer colds per year than sedentary people. For



instance, one observational study found those who did aerobic exercise at

least 5 days a week had about 40–50% fewer sick days with cold symptoms than those who did one day or less of activity⁹. Exercise may help by reducing

⁹ Nieman DC, Henson DA, Austin MD, Sha W. *Upper respiratory tract infection is reduced in physically fit and active adults. Br J Sports Med.* 2011 Sep;45(12):987-92. doi: 10.1136/bjsm.2010.077875. Epub 2010 Nov 1. PMID: 21041243.

stress hormones and inflammation, and by accelerating immune cell turnover. However, **avoid overtraining** or extreme endurance exercise without adequate rest, as very intense exercise can temporarily weaken immunity. Balance is key.

- **Stress Management:** Chronic stress can weaken the immune system, making you more susceptible to infections. High stress levels increase cortisol, which can interfere with the body's ability to mount an immune response. Find healthy ways to manage stress – whether it's through prayer, meditation, deep-breathing exercises, or simply enjoyable hobbies. Staying socially connected (even if it's virtual or via phone during peak illness seasons) and maintaining a positive mindset can also bolster your immunity. A laugh a day may indeed help keep the doctor away – laughter and happiness have been linked to better immune function.
- **Avoid Smoking and Limit Alcohol:** If you smoke, know that tobacco smoke irritates the respiratory tract and impairs the cilia (tiny hair-like structures) in your airways that help

clear out germs. Smokers get more frequent and more severe colds, and are more prone to complications like bronchitis or pneumonia. Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your respiratory health. Similarly, heavy alcohol consumption can suppress various immune defenses; it's wise to drink only in moderation, if at all. In contrast, staying hydrated with water and herbal teas keeps mucous membranes moist and better at trapping microbes.

- **Minimize Exposure:** During peak cold and flu months (fall and winter), take extra care in crowded public spaces. This might mean regularly disinfecting commonly touched objects in your home or workplace (doorknobs, light switches, keyboards, phones), especially if someone in the household is sick. It could also mean wearing a face mask in high-risk settings (we've seen during the COVID-19 pandemic that masks and distancing dramatically cut down

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