

What you need to know about infectious diseases

Today, we all enjoy more accessible contact with cultures around the world. As quickly as you can travel thousands of miles, an infectious disease can be your silent companion, landing at your destination and spreading like wildfire. Infectious diseases are on the rise. Bacteria and viruses are mutating quickly these days, as various strains become resistant to more antibiotics.

Diseases like tuberculosis, malaria and polio are now making a comeback. New diseases, such as bird flu and mad cow disease are breaking out in unexpected places. These diseases warrant your attention, but there's not much you can currently do to protect against them. However, there are many more common infectious diseases which you can effectively ward off with a few simple but proactive steps.

Many infectious diseases are spread by a simple lack of good hygiene. Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze and teach your kids to do this as well. Follow up by washing your hands. This can prevent the whole family from coming down with a cold or flu. Statistics show that the average child comes down with anywhere from six to twelve colds each year. Many are preventable. Kids who sneeze, don't cover their mouths and go right on playing with toys the next kid picks up, spread colds like wildfire.

Combatting the threat of infectious diseases by building a strong immune system is another helpful strategy. Another reason to get your five dailies of fruits and vegetables. Vitamins A, C and E, all abundant in these foods, help strengthen the immune system. Zinc supplements increase the availability of these vitamins.

There are also herbs which can boost immune system function. For example, echinacea, or cone flower, is now well-known as an immune system tonic. Many people swear that a combination of echinacea and vitamin C, taken at the first sign of a cold, effectively prevents a full-blown case, either knocking out the cold before it ever gets going or radically reduces the duration. Echinacea may be taken on a 10 days on, 10 days off basis to build immune system function and response in the long term.

Garlic is another amazing plant, proven to destroy 28 different pathogens. Staphylococcus, the source of the notorious staph infection is just one. If you feel a sore throat coming on, a cup of tea with garlic and honey can do the trick.

For respiratory infectious diseases, such as bronchitis and pneumonia,

elecampane root is a natural antibiotic which is specific to respiratory conditions. Again, be proactive. You may well be able to nip these types of infectious diseases in the bud.

Preventing many infectious diseases is often far easier than curing them once they've taken hold. You'll be surprised at how many fewer days of illness you and your family will experience by practicing good hygiene, dietary habits and building a strong immune system.