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Preventing The Flu

The key to staying healthy in the colder months is to act preventively by promoting a healthy immune system and taking good care of yourself. The tools of the trade are simple and often overlooked. Here is a guide to the basics of a healthy immune system.

Hydration: WATER is best: 8-10, 8 oz glasses every day.

Sleep: 8-10 hours of restorative sleep every night.

Practice Good Basic Hygiene:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for the duration of saying your ABC's or with alcohol based hand sanitizers.
- Sneeze into your elbow, or cover mouth and nose with a tissue then throw it into the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, mouth.
- If you are sick, stay home and REST!

Stay Informed and Don't Panic:

- Gather your information from the Washington State Department of Health, the Center for Disease Control, or other reputable sources. Mainstream media will not be as accurate or informative.
 - Washington State Dept. of Health - <http://www.doh.wa.gov>
 - Center for Disease Control - <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1FLU/>
 - Herscula Laboratories, Complementary and Alternative Medicine in Influenza - <http://hersculaboratoryflu.org/index.html>

Manage Stress Effectively

Stress significantly impairs your immune system and makes you more susceptible to disease. You might do physical exercise or practice deep breathing to reduce stress. Avoid excessive caffeine, alcohol and curb use of unprescribed substances. Psychotherapy is a good option when other lifestyle modifications are not effective.

Seek Physical Medicine Treatments to Stimulate Your Immune System:

- Acupuncture: Regular acupuncture treatments will support the body's ability to regulate and balance its own healing systems, increasing the immune system's strength to effectively respond to germs. Studies have shown that both the frequency of upper respiratory tract infections and the intensity of the symptoms can be reduced by preventative acupuncture treatments.

- **Chiropractic Care:** Chiropractic care corrects spinal abnormalities called vertebral subluxations that result in interference of the nervous system. Since the nervous system controls all functions of the body -- including the immune system -- chiropractic care can have a positive effect on immune function.
- **Constitutional Hydrotherapy:** Constitutional hydrotherapy is a series of hot and cold towels applied to the chest and back. Gentle electrical stimulation may be used to enhance the treatment. Naturopathic physicians use this method for promoting overall health and immune system strength.

Commonly Recommended Immune Support Measures:

- Rinse the sinuses using a Neti Pot every day to promote healthy sinuses.
- **Take Probiotics:** A recent pediatric study reported that children ages 3-5 years who took probiotics 2X/day reduced fever incidence by 72%, coughing by 62% and cold symptoms by 60%. So make sure you talk to your practitioner about nutritional and reliable supplemental sources of probiotics.
- Take a multivitamin from a reputable manufacturer; ask your practitioner for recommendations.
- Continue taking herbs and/or supplements recommended for your history of reoccurring illnesses/conditions. Ask your practitioner for advice.

Flu Shot:

Decide if the flu shot and/or the H1N1 vaccination is right for you. Read the recommendations on the CDC website (<http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1FLU/>) and/or talk with your practitioner.

Seasonal Flu Shot Availability:

Most local pharmacies are offering seasonal flu shots. Some stores offer flu shots on a walk-in and appointments basis. Other pharmacies have scheduled flu shot clinics. Please contact your local pharmacy.

Flu shots are also available at Seattle and King County Public Health Clinics. For a list of public immunization clinics go to:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/locations/immunization.aspx>

Following are pharmacies with published information about flu shot availability:

- **Pharmaca Integrative Pharmacy:** Scheduled clinics. Go to <http://www.pharmaca.com/wellness/flu-shots-2009> for flu shot clinic schedule.
- **Bartell Drugs:** Many stores offer flu shots on a walk-in or appointment basis. Contact your local Bartells. Bartell also has a series of flu shot clinics. Go to <http://www.bartelldrugs.com/health/Flu09.html> for more information and flu shot clinic schedules
- **Rite-Aid:** By appointment and during scheduled clinics. Contact your local Rite-Aid or go to <http://www.riteaid.com>