

JUST JESS on HEALTH:



Colds and Flu

The winter season is here, once again highlighting the importance of understanding the difference between colds & flu, as well as bacterial & viral infections. This understanding, alongside further information on how to boost the immune system naturally, will help with early detection, prevention and treatment.

Bacterial vs. Viral

It is very important that bacterial and viral infections be distinguished in diagnosis. This is because both can cause mild to severe infection and can exhibit similar symptoms, however, they **CANNOT** be treated in the same way.

Bacterial infections are caused by microbes like staphylococcus, streptococcus and e.coli to name a few. These infections can be treated with anti-biotics, homeopathic medications and herbs. Viral infections, on the other hand, are caused by microbes like the influenza virus, rhinovirus (the common cold), and HIV/Aids to name a few. These infections are NOT treatable with anti-biotics, but can be treated with anti-virals, herbs and homeopathic medications.

Many herbs and homeopathic remedies have both anti-bacterial and anti-viral properties. This vast coverage makes them effective in the treatment of bacterial and viral, as well as parasitic and fungal infections. Through the use of herbs, a good probiotic and a case specific homeopathic remedy, treatment can allow for microbe eradication, reduction in recovery time and the restoration of wellness both quickly and gently.

So what is the difference between colds and flu?

Both are caused by viruses (and therefore cannot be treated with anti-biotics!!).

Cold

- Virus: rhinovirus
- Symptoms: runny nose, headache, sinus pain, coughing, sneezing (your doctor should differentiate this from hayfever or sinusitis)
- Duration: 7-10 days
- Complications: otitis (ear pain or infection), sinusitis, upper or lower respiratory tract infections

Influenza

- Virus: influenza virus part of a group of viruses called the myxovirus
- Symptoms: fever, body pains, headaches, chills, fatigue, coughing, sneezing and a sore throat
- Duration: 12 days, however, recovery can take longer
- Complications: upper or lower bacterial or viral infections

So how can we strengthen our immune system to help fight off these potential infections?

Your immune system is made up of three lines of defence. The first line includes barriers and mechanisms put into place to eradicate germs on a daily basis. This includes your skin, coughing and sneezing reflex, ear wax production, tear production, the lining of your mucous membranes, as well as the ph of our saliva and gastric juices. If microbes make it past this first line defence, then the second line defence kicks in. The second line defence is in the form of an inflammatory response (your innate immunity) and can involve symptoms of pain, inflammation and fever. Remember that fever **within reason** is a good thing as it's your body's way of destabilising the environment so that microbes cannot survive. The third line defence (your learned immunity) will be reflected in blood results with elevated white blood cells and anti-body production indicating there is an underlying infection that your body is trying to deal with.

So how do I strengthen my immune system?

What most people don't realise is that 80% of the immune system arises within the gut. This is referred to as the gut associated lymphoid tissue (GALT). Therefore, a nourished healthy gut contributes to a healthy immune system. Incorporate fresh fruit and veg in your diet, foods rich in pre and probiotics like kombucha, kimchi and kefir. Stay away from foods that degrade the lining of the gut. This would include having a poor diet, reaching for processed foods, foods that are too acidic and contain too much sugar, frequent use of alcohol, anti-biotics and non-steroidal anti-inflammatories all contribute to weakening the immune system.

Alongside a healthy gut one should boost vitamin D levels. This not only affects your immune system, but it also positively affects your mood. Spend around 10 -15 minutes in the sun daily, or atleast 3 x weekly (without SPF). If you are going to be in the sun longer than 15 minutes I recommend wearing a sun protection factor of around 30. An appropriate amount of sleep also contributes to a healthy immune system. Adults should be getting around 7-9 hours a night, teenagers around 8-10 hours and children 12-13 hours.

One can also reach for supplements over the winter months to improve immunity:

- Echinacea is fantastic in preventing bacteria from moving down into the lower respiratory tract.
- Vitamin C is great as it allows for healthy white blood cell production to protect your body against infection.
- A probiotic to nourish the good bacteria in the gut and boost immunity

If you have any questions, would like to book an immune boosting injection or just want to focus on boosting your immune system to fight off infection naturally please don't hesitate to email or message.

Dr Jess

Look out for issues to come as we explore how homeopathy and alternative medicine/ healing can help us in our day to day lives – from first aid, medical conditions all the way through to healthy lifestyle tips.



Dr Jessica Bussicott
M.Tech Homeopathy (UJ)
Cell: 076 051 7532