

INFLUENZA - PREVENTION & TREATMENT

PREVENTION OF INFLUENZA

The following are options for trying to prevent influenzas &/or respiratory tract infections. *These are in addition to the general measures described in "Prevention of Infections"* - it is most important to identify and treat the causes of increased susceptibility to infections - this should be one's primary aim, especially if these routine specific measures prove ineffective.

INFLUENZA IMMUNISATION

The Department of Health recommends the influenza immunisation for:

- Those aged 65 and over
- Those suffering with underlying health problems that put them at risk of complications of 'flu, eg:
 - Chronic respiratory disease, including asthma
 - Chronic heart, kidney or liver disease
 - Diabetes mellitus requiring medication
 - Immunosuppression due to disease or treatment
- Those living in long stay residential care
- Those who are the main carer for an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill
- Health & social care workers
- Poultry workers

HOMEOPATHIC PROTECTION

Constitutional Homeopathic Treatment strengthens your whole system at a fundamental level - the right remedy greatly improves your sense of well-being, energy, ability to cope, immune function and the vast majority of your symptoms because it has a deep multi-system strengthening effect. For constitutional homeopathy you need to consult a homeopath.

Specific Homeopathic Prevention uses homeopathic medicines that are specific to the infectious diseases one is trying to prevent. There is a long tradition in homeopathy of the use of homeopathic medicines to prevent certain specific diseases, and the clinical impression of myself and many other homeopaths is that it appears to confer a very useful degree of protection. However at present there is minimal "hard" objective scientific evidence that this type of homeopathic prevention of infectious diseases is effective. I do not recommend against conventional immunisation unless there are recognised medical contraindications. If you decide not to use conventional immunisations and to use homeopathic medicines as an alternative, it is entirely your choice, at your own risk and on an understanding of the risks involved - and I cannot accept any responsibility if you should contract one or more of these diseases. These remedies, like all homeopathic medicines, are very safe and can be combined with conventional immunisations or drugs if necessary.

Influenza

For those who would rather not have the conventional immunisation, I use a homeopathic potency of the current year's influenza vaccine (available each October) to which I add potencies of most influenza vaccines used since 1970 - so it covers a very wide range of influenza viruses. To further increase the range of protection I also add

potencies of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and adenovirus, which are common causes of respiratory tract infections. I recommend it is taken every 3 to 4 weeks throughout the winter months, or longer if required. I have used the influenza prevention described below for more than 20 years and the vast majority of the those taking it have been very satisfied with it - but it doesn't work for everybody.

I recommend homeopathic influenza protection for those who:

- Are particularly prone to influenza but do not want to have the conventional immunisation.
- Fall into the above risk categories but do not want to have the conventional immunisation.
- Fall into the above risk categories, but the conventional influenza immunisation:
 - Is contra-indicated for medical reasons.
 - Has caused adverse reactions.
 - Has previously given inadequate protection.

Respiratory Tract Infections

I use the remedy Bacillinum for reducing susceptibility to winter respiratory infections, eg. colds, sinusitis, middle ear infections, sore throats, laryngitis or chest infections. This can be taken alone or along with the influenza prevention.

TREATMENT OF INFLUENZA

The main principles are to give your body the best opportunity to react appropriately and overcome the virus. Anything that suppresses your normal healthy response to an invading virus will tip the balance in the virus's favour, while anything that assists your system to function more efficiently will tip the balance in your favour. Remember that the symptoms you develop represent your system's response to infection. Most bugs are very temperature sensitive - fever is of major importance in killing them - you should not suppress it unless absolutely necessary. In young children (under the age of 5) there can be a risk of febrile convulsions if the temperature rises very quickly - this is best managed by tepid sponging in a cool environment. Mucus production, runny nose & eyes, sneezing, cough, loose frequent stools, increased urination and sweating are your body's way of trying to rid itself of bugs or /and toxins - don't suppress them unless absolutely necessary.

CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR or NHS Direct for assessment and advice if:

- You have a serious underlying illness.
- You are pregnant.
- Your sick child is under 1 year old.
- You or your child's condition suddenly gets much worse.
- You or your child's symptoms are severe or persistent.
- Your condition is still getting worse after 7 days (5 days for a child).

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Rest - the first thing is to rest and sleep as much as possible. Reduce the demands placed on your system so that it has more energy to do what it needs to do.

Water - drink plenty of clear fluids - don't let yourself get dehydrated. When you have a fever and more so if you are sweating and even more so if you have diarrhoea, you lose a lot of fluid that needs to be replaced. You lose salts along with the fluid loss - so salt replacement is wise, such as Dioralyte or similar (containing sodium and potassium salts), preferably take some magnesium 300-500 mg daily (eg. as magnesium citrate). Excellent natural alternatives are thin vegetable juices, soups and broths as long as some regular salt (sodium chloride) is added and you continue to drink clear fluids.

Diet - eat as little and often as you feel the need. Avoid large meals, difficult to digest foods, those that do not suit you very well, or that you know you are or have been intolerant to - as these will put extra demands on your system.

Attitude - try to have a positive relaxed and accepting attitude. Don't try to fight or resist what your body is trying to do - notice and stay in touch with your feelings and sensations, go with the flow and attend to it's needs.

CONVENTIONAL TREATMENT

- Paracetamol, aspirin, ibuprofen, pseudoephedrine and the like suppress symptoms & your body's response - they do not help it work more efficiently - use only if necessary.
- Most of the time antivirals are of relatively limited benefit.
- Antibiotics may be indicated if there is secondary bacterial infection or to try and prevent it in very compromised individuals.
- If you use a steroid nasal spray, consider temporarily stopping it since steroids are immunosuppressive. Systemic and inhaled steroids (for asthma) *must not be stopped*.

HOMEOPATHIC TREATMENT

There are really no routine, specific, reliable homeopathic remedies for influenza - homeopathy is about prescribing a remedy that exactly matches the symptom picture of the patient. Far better results are likely if a single remedy is chosen based on the actual symptoms you are suffering from. An experienced homeopath is more likely to choose the right remedy for you, but if you are not registered with a homeopath, try one from the following list that best fits your symptoms.

Dosage: use a 30c potency and take a dose (one pill) every hour or two, if the symptoms are fairly severe, or every 4 to 8 hours, if not so severe - for the first few doses, then gradually less often as the symptoms improve, taking a dose as required to maintain improvement until back to normal. If there is no definite improvement within 12-24 hours it is unlikely to help by taking it for longer - so stop it and try something else.

Specific Remedies - either or both of the following are worth trying:

- **AGE (Arsenicum iod. + Gelsemium + Eupatorium perf.) 30c:** a "specific" combination remedy which has traditionally been used for influenza prevention - use as soon as any symptoms develop or after contact.
- **Anas barb 200c:** a "specific" remedy - use as soon as any symptoms develop or after contact.

Individualised Remedies - the chosen remedy could be taken along with Anas barb. if desired.

- **Aconite:** sudden onset of symptoms; triggered by cold winds, cold dry weather or getting chilled (opposite of Gelsemium); fever with chilliness, throbbing pulses, restlessness and anxiety; good in the first stages of cold or influenza.
- **Belladonna:** the number one remedy for sudden fevers; the patient is "burning up", red and hot; eyes may be glassy with dilated pupils; thirsty for refreshing drinks; inflamed sore throat; throbbing headache, better for lying down; worse for touch, jarring or movement.
- **Bryonia:** a major keynote is: worse for any movement, which causes pain - so wants to be absolutely still and be left alone. Painful dry cough; pleurisy. Headache and pains: better from pressure; worse movement and cough (Eup-per.), noise. Irritable; thirsty for cold drinks (Phosphorus); white tongue. Anxiety, dreams and/or delirium are about business; in delirium he "wants to go home".
- **Gelsemium:** aching, heaviness, tiredness and weakness felt especially in muscles, limbs, eyelids and head. Drowsy, dull, apathetic, dizzy and trembling. Bursting headache, from neck, over head to eyes and forehead; relieved by copious urination. "Chills and heats chase one another". Chills in back. No thirst. Colds and fevers of mild winters (opposite to Aconite).

- **Eupatorium perfoliatum:** intense aching in back, limbs and especially bones - which feel as if they are broken or dislocated. Sore skin and muscles; bursting headache with nausea; sore chest with cough. Worse from movement - dare not move for pain (opposite of Pyrogen). Shivering; chills in back (Gels., Pyrog.). Chill begins 7 to 9 a.m. Eyeballs sore (Bry., Gels.).
- **Nux vomica:** extreme chilliness - shivery, cannot get warm, despite bed coverings and external warmth - despite a fever feels freezing inside. Aching limbs and gastric problems - nausea. Better from sleep, hot drinks, strong pressure and being left alone. Chilliness from the slightest movement, slightest draught or exposure to open air, after drinking.
- **Pyrogen:** violent pulsations and intense restlessness. Pulse very rapid; high temperature with slow pulse, or the reverse. Chilliness no heat can warm (Nux, Gels.). Creeping chills in back, with thumping heart. Bursting headache, with intense restlessness. Hard bed sensation: feels beaten, bruised (Arnica). Better beginning to move (opposite to Rhus-t), has to keep on moving, rocking, wriggling, for momentary relief.
- **Camphora:** Icy coldness; is sensitive to cold yet doesn't want covers on, and wants cold drinks. Sudden state of collapse, anxiety, wants company.
- **Baptisia:** rapid onset, rapid deterioration, great prostration. Face dull dusky red: appears drugged, besotted; high temperature; semi-comatose, drops asleep while answering questions. "Gastric flu" : sudden attacks of violent diarrhoea and vomiting. Pneumonia in 'flu with this besotted appearance. In the worst cases, mouth and throat are foul and discharges very offensive (Merc.). Delusion that parts of body are dissociated, as if scattered about and can't get himself together (Petrol., Pyrogen).
- **Rhus toxicodendron:** stiff, lame and bruised on first moving (opposite of Pyrogen), eases with movement, until he becomes weak and must rest, then restlessness and uneasiness drive him to move again - worse at rest and better for motion (opposite of Bryonia). Triggered by cold damp weather; from cold damp when perspiring (Dulc.). Anxiety, fear; worse at night (Aconite). Restlessness; intense fever; thirst; great prostration; severe aching in bones (Eup-per.). Weeps without knowing why (Puls.). An odd fear of being poisoned.
- **Mercurius:** profuse, very offensive sweating; very foul mouth (Bapt.); excessive salivation; offensiveness of everything; worse from sweating; or no relief from sweating.

AFTER INFLUENZA

Here are just a few remedies one might consider for symptoms persisting after influenza - as always a remedy is best selected on the basis of your detailed symptom picture. Usually the correct remedy will be your constitutional remedy.

- **Tuberculinum aviare:** not well since flu, especially when the lungs have been affected. Coughs are irritating, incessant and tickling. There is great debility and weight loss and lack of appetite.
- **China:** continued debility and chilliness; weariness of limbs, with desire to stretch, move, or change position. Worse on alternate days. Sensitive to touch: to motion: to cold air. Worse alternate days.
- **Kali phosphoricum:** general weakness with spasms - the slightest labour seems like a heavy task.
- **Phosphoric acid** - chronic fatigue after 'flu. Better from warmth, sleep. Feels apathetic, dull, settled despair, indifferent to everything. Low continued fevers.
- **Gelsemium:** with heats and chills; weakness and heaviness of limbs, head and eyelids; mild fever (37 - 38°C)
- **Arsenicum:** chilliness; restlessness; anxiety, fear; fear of death (Aconite); prostration; burnings, relieved by heat. Thirst for sips of cold water. Oversensitive; fastidious. Odd sensations: red-hot-needle pains; of ice-water running through veins; of boiling water going through blood-vessels.
- **Pulsatilla:** flitting chilliness; chills in spots; cold creeps in back; chilly in warm room. Heat as if hot water thrown over him; external warmth intolerable; worse in a close room; must throw off clothes. One-sided chilliness, heat or sweat. Better: out of doors, open air, for slow motion. Dry cough at night, goes on sitting up: returns on lying down again (Hyos). Thirstless: no hunger. Tearfulness, better for company and consolation.
- **Sulphur:** partially recovers and then relapses. Frequent flushes of heat. Very sensitive to/worse in: open air, to draughts (opposite to Puls.), washing and bathing. Oppression, burning, stitches, congestion in chest. Heat crown of head with cold feet. Soles burn at night, must be put out of bed. Hungry - starving at 11 am. Drowsy by day: restless nights. Starts from frightful dreams.

BOTANICAL TREATMENT

- **Bee Prepared Max Strength Immune Support** (UnBEElievable Health; Bee propolis 5:1 extract 200mg, Elderberry 6:1 extract 110mg, Olive leaf 8:1 extract 85mg, Astaxanthin extract 900mcg, Beta 1,3/1,6 Glucans 50mg, Reishi mushroom extract 50mg; 20 caps) 1 - 4 daily *at the first signs of an infection. THIS IS AN EXCELLENT PRODUCT.*
- **Echinacea** - follow the directions on the specific product bought. There is little point in taking it for more than a few days if it is not helping.
- **Propolis** 600 mg three times a day for adults.

NUTRITIONAL TREATMENT

The following suggested doses are for adults. Consult your practitioner for advice concerning children's doses.

- *Vitamin C* 1000 - 2000 mg every 4-6 hours, up to 10 grams a day. If this induces loose bowels, reduce the amount taken each time.
- *Zinc* 15 mg (eg. as zinc citrate) one two or three times a day, preferably between meals, for a few days, then reduce to one a day.
- *Vitamin A* 20,000 iu once or twice a day for a few days. *Pregnant women or those who might be or are planning to be pregnant should take beta carotene 60 mg daily instead of vitamin A.*
- *Vitamin D* 5000 iu daily until better, then reduce dose to usual maintenance dose. See information sheet "Vitamin D".
- *Vitamin B12* 5000 mcg (5 mg) daily.

RESOURCES

Information sheets are available from the office (see full list on my website):

- General Dietary Advice
- Exercise for Health
- Relaxation Essentials + A Simple Relaxation Exercise
- Prevention of Infections
- Influenza and RTI - Instructions
- The Management of Insomnia
- Nutritional Supplements - Recommendations for Adults