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Dr. Elliott's Non-Pharmaceutical Approach for the Treatment of Influenza, Colds, and Other Upper Respiratory Viruses

What is the flu?

In the medical world, the word flu is the short term for “influenza”, a specific kind of virus, which includes Avian flu. The public has come to use the term “flu” loosely to refer to any upper respiratory, flu-like viral illness. The influenza virus typically causes fever, cough, sore throat, headaches, achy muscles and joints, and exhaustion.

What is the flu vaccine?

Vaccines are specific only for the influenza virus. They do not protect against other flu-like illnesses. And they do not protect against all influenza viruses. Each year the World Health Organization uses strains from the prior year's influenza viruses to make the vaccines for the current year. Viruses are known to frequently mutate which means that the vaccine would not protect against the mutated species, nor would it protect against different species from those found in the vaccine. There is no way to know ahead of time which influenza viruses will cause a problem in the current year. In the 2003-2004 flu season, the Center for Disease Control admitted that the vaccines were of little benefit in protecting against the influenza strains present at that time.

Flu shots still use thimerosal as a preservative. Thimerosal contains mercury. Some vaccines do not list thimerosal on the label. The level of mercury found in the flu vaccine is many times higher than the limits of exposure set by the EPA. Mercury is a potent neurotoxin, with a high affinity for the brain and nervous system.

What anti-viral drugs are available?

Tamiflu and Amantadine are commonly used anti-viral drugs. If they are given within 48 hours of the onset of influenza, they can reduce the duration of symptoms by one day, according to the Center for Disease Control.

What non drug options should be considered?

Since there is no vaccine for Avian flu, and Tamiflu, if available, is of limited benefit, looking at other options might be wise.

Prevention

- 1) Eat a nutrient dense diet and get adequate rest and exercise and take your vitamins and minerals and fish oils.
- 2) Since the principal route of entry for respiratory viruses is through the nose, beginning now, make it a daily habit to rinse out your nose morning and evening with warm water and a pinch of baking soda or salt. Make sure the water rinses all the way to the root of

the nose and to the back of the throat. You could use a Neti Pot from the health food store or a bulb syringe, the kind used to suction the nostrils of newborn babies.

3) When you are in public places, especially in airplanes, put a drop of aromatic essential oils just under your nose (peppermint, rosemary, eucalyptus, or pine) and breath in the oils deep into your airways. The aromatic oils act as disinfectants. Reapply the drop of oil each hour while you are exposed to potential pathogens and to people who are sick.

4) Remember to wash your hands after exposure to potential pathogens and when you are around people who are sick. Try to avoid putting your fingers in your mouth without having washed your hands first.

Treatment

When you get the flu, try to be patient. The normal time for true influenza to run its course is 10-14 days. If there is significant lung involvement, the symptoms could linger for 3-4 weeks. **If you suspect you have pneumonia, characterized by difficulty breathing, coughing, and a persistent fever lasting more than 3 or 4 days, it is important to be seen by a physician.** Although viruses are not killed by antibiotics, sometimes antibiotics are justified in cases where a super-imposed bacterial infection in the lungs is suspected.

Anti-Viral Remedies

Natural remedies need to be started at the very first sign of a viral infection, even if you just have a scratchy throat or a little cough and are not sure if it's anything serious. If you wait until you have the full blown symptoms of influenza, the remedies are less effective. The following recommendations and dosages apply to an average sized adult. These same remedies can be used on children but the dosages need to be carefully adjusted. Look for equivalent formulations for children and follow the recommended dose on the bottle.

For a very potent, but bitter tasting concoction, try mixing the following ingredients in a large glass of water and take 3 times a day for 10 days, or until symptoms abate:

1. Oil of oregano tincture. The tincture, while more effective than capsules, tastes disagreeable. Use the amount recommended
2. Elderberry extract tincture. It is preferable to take the tincture, not the syrup.
3. Colloidal silver liquid. Take the recommended amount on the bottle.
4. Echinacea tincture. Add 1 dropperful per dose. The dose can be repeated as frequently as every hour, if tolerated. The Echinacea tincture should make the tip of your tongue feel numb. If not, it probably is not potent enough. The company Herbs, Etc. makes a potent Echinacea.
5. Goldenseal tincture. Take 1 dropperful per dose no more than 3 times a day for a maximum of 7 days. Do not take if pregnant.

In addition, consider taking the following supplements:

- Olive leaf extract. Take as directed on the bottle. When choosing which brand to buy, choose the one that contains the greatest amount of oleuropein, the active ingredient.
- Vitamin A. While 10,000 IU is the normal daily dose for vitamin A, a very high dose for a short period of time has anti-viral effects. Take 100,000 IU a day for 5 days only, then stop. Beta-carotene, while related to vitamin A, does not have this anti-viral effect. Do not take if pregnant.
- Buffered Vitamin C. Take 1000mg every 2 hours while awake. If you get diarrhea or abdominal discomfort, cut back the dose until gastrointestinal symptoms are tolerable.
- L-lysine 1000mg 3 times a day. This is an amino acid known for its anti-viral properties.
- Selenium cruciferate. The normal daily dose of this trace mineral is 200mcg. When sick, take 600mcg a day. (Brazil nuts contain around 75 mcg per nut.)
- If you have a sore throat, suck on zinc gluconate throat lozenges every 2-3 hours.
- Continue taking your normal vitamin and mineral supplements. A good, convenient source is Daily Advantage vitamin packs. (800-888-1415)
- Omega 3 fish oils act as anti-inflammatory agents. Suggested dose is 2000mg twice a day. Nordic Natural is a brand which meticulously removes toxins from the oil.
- Magnesium citrate or glycinate 400-600mg a day. Too much magnesium can cause diarrhea.

If all of the above sounds too daunting in terms of number of things to take, you can find supplements at the health food stores that contain a combination of several of the above ingredients. For example, Garden of Life makes a product called Seasonal Relief which includes oil of oregano, olive leaf extract, Echinacea, goldenseal, and elderberry. Take 3 caplets 3 times a day. Or there is “Cold ‘N Flu” by New Chapter, 1 gel cap 3 times a day. It would be acceptable to take the minimum dose daily throughout flu season (November –March) of either Cold ‘N Flu or Seasonal Relief.

Diet

Drink plenty of fluids. Dehydration can be a problem with the flu. Sip on fluids all day. To determine if enough fluids are being taken, look at the urine. It should be very light in color. While it is the custom to drink apple and orange juice, or even sodas when sick, I don’t recommend this habit because it provides a surge of **sugar which temporarily inhibits the effectiveness of the immune system**. Sugars make the white blood cells act sluggish and less effective in fighting the infection. Sugars also create an acidic environment in the body which is conducive to infection. (Sugar substitutes other than xylitol and stevia are not recommended.) The following drinks are recommended:

1. Non-caffeinated herbal teas. My favorite is ginger and licorice root tea made from the roots and boiled for 5 minutes. Sip on the tea throughout the day. Chamomille tea also has anti-inflammatory benefits.
2. Soups made from fresh vegetables. Chicken soup cooked with the bones provides a good supply of electrolytes and trace minerals.
3. Filtered water. A freshly squeezed lemon or lime in an unsweetened glass of water can be very beneficial.

4. Freshly juiced vegetables, including carrots, celery, beets, spinach, ginger, garlic, and a whole organic lemon with the rind, consumed at least once a day can decrease the healing time significantly.
5. Unsweetened coconut milk. Coconuts contain monolaurin which is anti-viral.
6. Avoid dairy and wheat while you are sick. Dairy especially tends to promote mucous formation, but wheat can also in some people.
7. Do not force yourself to eat solid foods. Brown rice and green vegetables and herbal teas are preferable until the appetite returns.
8. When the appetite returns and solid foods are taken, be sure to include plenty of vegetables such as kale, chard, spinach, and broccoli.

Rest

Be sure to allow yourself adequate time to rest and recover. Clinical experience shows that ample rest can help prevent the virus from lingering long past the normal course of infection.

Inhalation Therapy

For sinus and chest congestion, boil osha root and inhale the vapors deeply into the lungs. Do this 2 or 3 times during the day. Then drink the somewhat unpleasant tasting tea. If necessary, you can add a bit of raw, unpasteurized honey to make the tea more tolerable.

Symptomatic treatment for coughs

If your cough keeps you awake at night, try “Winter Cough Syrup” from Dragon River Herbals at the health food stores. If the cough is from post-nasal drip, try dye-free Benadryl before you go to bed, around 50mg, which will temporarily dry the secretions. If the cough persists, you may need to see your doctor to get a prescription for codeine. Try to avoid taking cough suppressant medication during the day, if possible, so that you can cough up the phlegm. Iodine drops, in the form of liquid kelp from the health food store, thin out the mucous so that the phlegm is able to be coughed up more easily. Use about 10 drops in water twice a day.

How to treat a fever

If you have a low grade fever, do not try to lower it with something like Tylenol or aspirin, unless you cannot tolerate the discomfort, or if it is at or near 104 degrees, or if you have a history of seizures. Your fever is nature’s way of killing the virus. Most viruses are heat sensitive. The fever also stimulates the white blood cell activity as well as other immune functions. If your temperature is not elevated, take a hot bath two or three times a day, soaking and sweating. Avoid getting chilled when you get out of the tub. Keep bundled up and cool down slowly.

Other immune support

Acupuncture, Chinese herbs, and homeopathy have been very helpful in relieving the symptoms of influenza and other viral illnesses in the hands of skilled practitioners. Consult your health care practitioner for more information about these forms of treatment.

Further treatment for shortening the course of illness

For my patients wanting an extra boost for their immune system in order to shorten the course of the illness, I offer high doses of intravenous vitamin C and glutathione. Glutathione is an amino acid that, when given in high doses intravenously, has an anti-viral effect, as does high doses of vitamin C.

How should these flu guidelines be used?

The above information and recommendations should not be substituted for the advice of your physician and the accurate diagnosis of your condition. In times of public health emergency when access to physicians may be limited, this information may be of use to individuals who must rely upon their own resources to treat the conditions described.