



# Healing News . . .

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## Herbal Medicines for Immune Support

by Julia Mercer, Herbalist

As we enter into fall and thoughts of colds and flu start entering our minds, it is a time to gather some helpful herbs to have on hand, should a nasty “bug” appear. Rarely are immune supporting herbs taken continuously over the long term as a preventative. More often they are used most effectively when we are feeling tired, worn, and on the verge of getting sick.

*Echinacea* is a well-known and trusted herb for immune support. Even mainstream pharmacies sell this herb as an immune booster. *Echinacea* is most effective when taken at the first sign of illness. However, if the illness feels as if it has taken hold, a combination of equal parts of *Echinacea*, *Ceanothus americanus* (Red Root) and *Glycyrrhiza glabra* (Licorice) is often helpful. Red Root is particularly useful for swollen conditions involving the lymph nodes and throat, while Licorice is useful for bronchial problems. Licorice is also used as an adaptogen —an herb that can serve many functions in the body, depending upon need. In this herbal blend, it helps balance the effects of the other two herbs.

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Another useful herb is *Eupatorium perfoliatum* (Boneset.) While some do not consider its properties to be primarily immune supporting, it is perhaps, one of the single best remedies for relieving aches and pains and helping the body deal with fever and congestion. As an aside, fevers may be as valuable to healing as gloves on a cold day. Depending upon the magnitude, we are often better served to let the fever incinerate organisms than suppressing the process.

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*Ceanothus americanus*

### The Immune System

..Skin and mucous membranes are first line defenses.

-The immune system is a network of specialized cells and tissues which distinguish between “self” and “non-self” and communicate protective information.

-Natural immunity is with us at birth.

-Adaptive immunity is acquired after the first exposure to a foreign organism.

## Immune System Basics

Our first line of defense is our skin, along with the mucous membranes lining our digestive, respiratory and reproductive systems. A foreign invader which gets past our physical barriers will meet the second line of defense —our innate immune system. This is referred to as “natural” or non-specific immunity and is with us at birth.

White blood cells including macrophages, neutrophils, eosinophils, and natural killer (NK) cells in tissues destroy foreign organisms by a combination of protein “poisons” or direct ingestion. Inflammation including redness, pain, swelling, and heat are all signs innate immunity is working.

The other piece of our immune network is “adaptive” or

specialized immunity. After the first exposure to a new organism specialized white blood cells (T and B-lymphocytes) produce antibodies and chemicals (cytokines) that are specifically formulated to kill the new foreign invader.

The thymus, bone marrow, spleen, and specialized lymph tissues throughout the body help in this process.

## Simple Immune Boosters

Dr. Karen J. Benton

The good news is that there is little or no evidence on the molecular level that immune system function declines with age. However, as we age our bodies tend to accumulate more toxic substances and nutrient deficiencies which interfere with good immune system recognition and communication. So, boosting immune function means *strengthening defenses, reducing exposures to toxins, and helping elimination.*

Good ways to strengthen immune defenses involve lifestyle factors such as making good food and supplement choices, reducing stress, improving sleep and increasing movement.

Some supplements which help strengthen the immune system support the mucous membranes which are part of our first-line defenses. *Probiotics* (human friendly bacteria) help “crowd” out other unfriendly organisms; *beta-carotenes* support tissue integrity and function; *omega-3 fatty acids* such as those found in fish oil, reduce inflammation and pro-

vide necessary building blocks for cell membranes.

*Drinking sufficient pure water, choosing whole foods and reducing sugars, caffeine and food additives* will create fewer toxins in the body. *Organic foods* contain no herbicides or pesticides which also act as poisons inside the human body. The best reason for buying organic is that these “cides” don’t know when to stop killing.

Refined sugars have the direct effect of weakening the immune system by reducing the number of white blood cells. Food additives and synthetic chemicals act as “unrecognizable” foreign substances in the body. They interfere with immune system function and cell-to-cell communication, energy production and elimination. Is it any surprise people often feel fatigued after eating packaged cookies or cupcakes?

*Stress* increases the level of cortisol in the body. If sustained at high levels “this fight or flight” hormone may weaken the immune system by binding with cell proteins and

altering cell expression and communication. Conventional treatments often use corticosteroids to suppress inflammation and immune function. *B-vitamins* are often a useful supplement to help support the body while dealing with stress.

Although our immune systems are always active, they are most active while we are asleep. Therefore, *sufficient sleep* is important to maintaining a healing balance within our bodies. *Castor oil packs* on the abdomen before bed serve to stimulate the large percentage of lymphoid tissue located within our abdominal cavity. *Dry skin brushing* also serves to stimulate lymph channels so toxins can be more easily eliminated while asleep..

*Physical movement* not only increases blood circulation and oxygenation, but also helps lymph move through the body and eliminate metabolic wastes and toxins more effectively.

Although there are many herbal and supplemental treatments for boosting immune function, ***“Prevention is still the best medicine.!”***

Improving lifestyle with better food choices, stress reduction, sleep and movement are all good ways to improve immune function.

## Herbal Medicines for Immune Support

*continued from page one*

*Astragalus membranaceus* is another herb that is most useful after an illness to help regain a healthy immune system. It can also be used as an herbal preventative to provide extra energy in rebuilding strength.

*Withania somnifera* (Ashwaghandha) is also helpful during cold and flu season. Like *Astragalus*, it is a tonic herb with a long history of use in ancient Ay-

urvedic (east Indian) medicine where it is known as “Indian Ginseng.” Historically, it has been used to increase vitality and help the body adapt to stressors and resist disease.

There are many wonderful herbs that can be blended to individual needs and preferences. While herbal medicines tend to have much fewer side effects than prescriptive medications, it is always helpful to check with your health care practi-

tioner regarding herbal interactions with medications and individual conditions and sensitivities.

Suggested Readings:

The New Holistic Herbal, David Hoffman  
The Book of Herbal Wisdom, Matthew Wood  
Rosemary Gladstar’s Family Herbal, Rosemary Gladstar

## Children's Immune Support

By Dr. Kelly B. Owens

Not surprisingly, children's immune systems function much like those of adults. The major exception, however, is that kids' immune systems are more actively "learning." That is, they are developing the acquired immunity which allows us to fight off infections as we repeatedly encounter the same organism.

Actively supporting your children through this learning process can help to ensure their immune system develops properly and stays strong.

First, make sure your children are getting enough *sleep*. It may not look like it, but during sleep our bodies are busy regenerating cells damaged by bacteria, viruses and aging, as well as regulating hormonal cycles. Sleep requirements range from 12 hours for a typical two-year old to nine hours for a twelve-year old child.

Second, feed your kids a *balanced, nutritious diet*. If you are nursing, continue to breastfeed your baby for as long as possible. Breastfeeding has been shown to decrease the incidence of diarrhea, blood infections, meningitis, asthma, respiratory illness, and ear infections in kids. As much as possible, feed your children a whole foods diet with a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. The high fiber found in whole foods increases the number of beneficial bacteria in the digestive

tract and helps to protect against gastrointestinal and other chronic diseases. Fruits and vegetables have higher levels of the important vitamins and minerals required to have an active immune system.

Be sure to make *physical activity* a regular part of your children's lives. Regular exercise has been shown to decrease the incidence of chronic disease, obesity and cancer. Movement also increases the body's ability to cope with stress. It also improves the body's ability to fight off infection.

Encourage your children to drink lots of clean *water*. The cells lining the inside of the mouth and nose are extremely prone to dehydration. When these tissues dry out, they develop small holes and cracks, thereby offering free passage to cold viruses. In contrast, well-hydrated mucus membranes are plump and more resistant to infection.

Do your best to avoid unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions and the overzealous use of antibiotic soaps and cleansers. Antibiotics are miraculous medicines when used judiciously, however antibiotic-resistant bacteria are becoming a frightening problem. Antibiotic soaps and cleansers also contribute to bacterial resistance and decrease the protective population of healthy bacteria on the skin. In virtually all cases, standard dishwashing soap cleans as well as antibacterial soap without the concerns about resistance or killing bacteria.

Don't smoke around your children. Kids exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to suffer from recurrent respiratory and ear infections as well as asthma. The symptoms are likely to be more severe and last longer than children with non-smoking parents.

Once children get sick, consider "warming socks" or a "warming T-shirt." A cotton sock or shirt is soaked in cool/cold water, wrung out, and covered with wool socks or a sweater before bedtime. In the process of responding to the cool temperatures, the immune system will be stimulated.

If (or when) despite your best efforts—your children catch a cold., take comfort in knowing that mild childhood infections are an important part of training the immune system. A cold virus your kids catch today is one they won't have to catch tomorrow!

## Aromatherapy and Immune Support

by Mary Lou Rak, LMP, NCTMB, Certified Aromatherapist

Aromatherapy can provide some excellent ways to help "ward off" flu and respiratory illnesses in fall and winter. Essential oils may also provide comfort and relief if one of those "bugs" takes up residence.

Many essential oils are antiviral and antibacterial. Using them as a barrier in a spray or

topical application may help prevent infection. Using specific oils as a steam inhalation or chest rub can help with congestion and body aches.

*Ravensara aromatica*, *Palmarosa*, and *Eucalyptus radiata* are all effective antiviral oils due to their terpene alcohol content. This barrier blend seems to be helpful for those with compro-

mised immune systems and is particularly effective against airborne organisms.

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*Please consult a certified aromatherapist if you have questions about aromatherapy.*

### Essential Oil

#### Immune Barrier Blend

3 drops *Ravensara*

3 drops *Eucalyptus*

*radiata*

4 drops *Geranium*

2 drops *Palmarosa*

Combine these essential oils in a 1 oz. (30 ml) spray bottle. Add enough distilled water to fill.

Shake Well and spray the air around you.

**CAUTION -DO NOT USE:** internally, in eyes, with children under 2 years old, or early pregnancy.

## *Dr. Jill E. Stansbury, CMA, BS, ND*



*Dr. Jill E. Stansbury*

Dr. Jill Stansbury is a naturopathic physician who has practiced in Southwest Washington for fifteen years specializing in women's health, mental health and chronic disease.

She holds undergraduate degrees in Medical Illustration and Medical Assisting from the Bryman School, and a BS in Scientific Illustration from San Jose State University. She graduated with honors from both programs. She received

her naturopathic degree from the National College of Naturopathic Medicine (NCNM) in Portland, Oregon.

Dr. Stansbury chairs the Botanical Medicine program at NCNM and teaches the core botanical curriculae. She has held these positions for over thirteen years.

In addition to her medical practice and teaching position, Dr. Stansbury also writes and serves as a medical editor for

numerous professional journals and lay publications. She also teaches natural products chemistry and herbal medicine around the country.

She is the mother of two teenage children. Her hobbies include art, music, gardening, camping, and studying quantum and metaphysics.



*Dr. Karen J. Benton*  
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## *Dr. Karen J. Benton, BS Psych, MBA, ND*

Dr. Benton is a graduate of the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Oregon and has a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from the University of Washington and a Masters of Business Degree from Boise State University. She has been a Hospice patient care volunteer for the past eight years and is a

volunteer physician at New Day Homeopathic Clinic in Portland. She is a member of the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians and the Washington Association of Naturopathic Physicians and the Battle Ground Chamber of Commerce.

Locally, Karen serves as co-

chair of the Communications Committee for Steps to a Healthier Clark County which focuses on reducing diabetes, asthma and obesity by encouraging healthier food choices and physical activity.

In addition to her "dog family," Karen enjoys stained glass design, hiking and Native American culture/traditions.



*Dr. Kelly B. Owens  
and her daughter, Sadie*

## *Dr. Kelly B. Owens, BS, ND*

Dr. Owens grew up in Vancouver, Washington and received her ND at the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Oregon. While studying at NCNM, Dr. Owens also completed a certificate in Natural Childbirth

and Obstetrics, including advanced training in the care of pregnant women and their children.

Dr. Owens writes regularly for the Vancouver Family magazine, and teaches classes throughout the community on

When she's not seeing patients, Dr. Owens enjoys playing with her 4-year-old daughter, cooking and eating good foods, gardening, hiking and cross country skiing.

## *Julia Mercer, BA, Herbalist*



*Julia Mercer, Herbalist*

Julia Mercer has studied and used herbs for the past thirteen years. She studied with herbalist Rosemary Gladstar, and received her certificate in herbal medicine from Sage Mountain Herb School in

East Barr, Vt. through the distance learning program.

She also holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Environmental Studies from Sonoma State University where she completed an internship in herbal medicine

as a resident with Larkin Child at the Integrative Medical Clinic of Santa Rosa.

### [Web Links We Like](#)

Type these into your search engine:

*Henrietta's home page (click on "Links I Like" within her home page.)*

*Gernot Katzer's spice dictionary.*

*stepsto ahealthierclarkco.org*

## *Laurie Solomon, BS, MSAOM, Licensed Acupuncturist (LAc)*

Laurie Solomon is a licensed acupuncturist (LAc.) who practices in Portland, OR. and Battle Ground, WA.

She grew up in Western New York and earned a Bachelor's degree in Animal Science at Cornell University, after working with horses professionally for several years. Laurie has studied herbal medicine

since 1988. She has learned through her studies that one herbal remedy may work well for one person while it can make another person's identical symptoms worse. So, while integrating these differing perspectives, Laurie chose to pursue a Master's degree in Acupuncture in Oriental Medicine at Bastyr University in Se-

attle, Washington.

During her study of Oriental Medicine, Laurie found each person is unique. Different types of disease patterns and constitutional body types require different nutritional, herbal or acupuncture treatments. She has been applying Oriental Medicine principles to successfully treat many condit-

ions during the past five years.

All organ systems may benefit from this type of treatment, including: respiratory, musculoskeletal, neurological, gastrointestinal, immunological, genitourinary, cardiac —as well as stress-related and hormonal imbalances.

## *MaryLou Rak, LMP, NCTMB, Certified Aromatherapist*



*Essential Oil Blends*

Mary Lou Rak has been a Licensed Massage Practitioner (LMP) for eight years and is nationally certified by the Board of Massage and Therapeutic Bodywork.

MaryLou has taken advanced training in CranioSacral Therapy through the Upledger Institute. Cranio-Sacral Therapy is a gentle method of detecting restrictions and rebalancing the

flow of cerebral spinal fluid. This encourages your own healing abilities. CranioSacral therapy may help a number of conditions such as migraine headaches, chronic neck and back pain, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), emotional difficulties and many other serious chronic conditions.

Mary Lou is also a certified

aromatherapist through both the Australasian School of Health Sciences and the Pacific Institute of Aromatherapy in 2003 and 2004.

MaryLou is a Reiki master, trained in the *Usui* method of Natural Healing.

To contact MaryLou:  
(360) 687-2100 or 260-7882

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**Fax: (360) 666-3670**

**The Natural Goods Store at Battle Ground Healing Arts specializes in providing a wide range of dried herbs, herbal tinctures, essential oils, homeopathic medicines and other specialty items.**

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**Store hours are 9-4pm Tues.- Fri., 9-1pm Saturday**

**Store Phone Number (360) 687-4492**

**◀STORE SPECIAL▶**



**Homemade Immune**

**Booster Soup Mix**

**- all organic ingredients**

**- great-tasting with some of the best immune boosting herbs and vegetables!**

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## **Acupuncture and Immune Support**

**by Laurie Solomon, LAc**



Each person has an underlying “constitutional” weakness that leaves their body vulnerable in one area or another. This weakness can lead to some people catching colds and flues. Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine work by strengthening each person’s underlying weakness and boosting their immune system.

If you have already caught a cold—acupuncture and herbal medicine can help relieve the symptoms of chills, fever, sniffles or sore throat in a safe, non-toxic way that doesn’t further weaken the body.

Antibiotics, on the other hand, often weaken the body and kill beneficial bacteria.

Acupuncture does not interfere with conventional or naturopathic medical treatment. On the contrary, it provides an enhancement and complement to “treating the whole person.” This emphasis often shortens the recovery time for illnesses. Some studies have shown certain blood counts and immune enhancing chemicals stay elevated for at least three days following an acupuncture treatment.

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LAc is a professional certification for a licensed acupuncturist. This means the practitioner has completed a masters degree in acupuncture and Oriental Medicine from an accredited University as well as an extensive clinical practice. The National Certification Commission of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine recognizes professional competence through an LAc designation.

**For more information, please see [www.acufinder.com](http://www.acufinder.com) OR**

**call Laurie Solomon**

**(360) 666-1070.**