

## Fall and the Flu

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Lynn Mayer, MA, CNC

Fall is a great time to focus on your immune system; strengthening and protecting it for the upcoming 'cold and flu season'. Contrary to the way that disease is portrayed in the media, microbes aren't the issue, a weakened immune system is. Microbes have been and will continue to share this planet with us. Many of them serve us well. Our job is to strengthen our immune system. It then has the ammunition it needs to seek and destroy the microbes that may be pathogenic to our bodies.

The number one cause of infection is malnutrition. Bacteria and viruses *thrive* on weakened tissue. The 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic that killed 40 million people globally within 9 months was due to an immune deficiency syndrome. This syndrome was caused by the lack of fresh foods available to the world's population. The world had its attention, transport and workers focused on the needs of World War I and away from fresh food production. Crops lay dying and unused; processed and preserved foods becoming the replacement. After four years of the vitamin and mineral malnutrition that this caused, people became breeding grounds for virulent pathogens.

When we contact a 'bug', our first line of defense is the mucosal lining of our respiratory and digestive tract. As the microbe comes into contact with this lining and with subsequent body systems, a *healthy* body will go through a natural process of identifying the microbe as alien. It will alert the immune system and mount an immune response even before the microbe has made its way into the bloodstream. This *natural* process may take 7-10 days to run its course from detection to elimination, but in doing so the body educates itself. Natural antibodies are made which then serve you for years.

One doesn't necessarily have to become sick for the body to educate itself in this way. A healthy body may easily come into contact and eradicate the microbe without one's knowing. Cutting edge theory indicates that exposure to bacteria and viruses in your environment, if you are healthy, can serve as natural vaccines to boost your immune system and decrease your risk of getting sick. Look up "The Hygiene Hypothesis" to expand your thinking.

On the other hand, with the flu shot, experts have speculated on which viruses are likely for the year, usually picking the top three for the current year's vaccine. When injected, the vaccine (including its toxins) goes directly into the bloodstream. This bypasses educating several body systems. Many people come down with the flu just from receiving the shot. Also, immunity to the virus, if they have guessed correctly, will only be for *one year*. If they haven't guessed correctly, then your body is still susceptible to whatever virus makes the rounds.

Halloween can start the cold and flu season with its heightened eating of sweets. The intake of refined sugar reduces the body's calcium level as well as reducing the activity of the white blood cells by up to 70%. Add holiday parties, Thanksgiving, Christmas, the stress that goes along with it all and we have 'a season'. Avoiding sugar is the single most important physical factor that you can do to avoid the flu.

My encouragement is to think wisely before jumping on the flu vaccine bandwagon. The ultimate treatment for the flu is proactive prevention. Eat the right foods, include garlic in your diet, avoid the junk, get plenty of rest, stay emotionally balanced and call me if you need help. Oh yes...and as your mother always encouraged...wash your hands.