

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service



K-State Research and Extension Family Nutrition Program

# DINING ON A DIME

## *Eating Better for Less*

*December / January*

### **Cold and Flu — Not You!**

Want to spread good cheer instead of germs this holiday season? Here are some simple ways to avoid germs and decrease your chances of getting a pesky cold or flu this winter.

**Get a flu shot.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone ages 6 months and older get a flu vaccine. This vaccination is the best way to reduce your chance of getting the flu. Late fall or early winter is the best time to get the flu shot each year.



**Do moderate physical activity.** Strive for 30 to 60 minutes a day.

**Sleep for at least seven hours a night.**

**Lather up well.** Your best defense against cold and flu bugs is to wash your hands. Soap up long enough to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice (about 20 seconds). If you can’t wash, use an alcohol-based sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

**Clean germ “hot spots” often.**

- Your kitchen sponge is likely one of the germiest spots in your home. What to do? Sanitize sponges by running them through your dishwasher’s drying cycle.
- Your kitchen sink drain likely harbors more than 500,000 bacteria per square inch. Twice a week, mix one tablespoon of chlorine bleach into four cups of water. Use it to scrub the basin of your sink, then pour the solution down the drain to clean it, too.
- Clean your kitchen counters with an anti-bacterial product after preparing or rinsing food, especially raw fruits and vegetables.
- Launder hand towels, reusable bags and diaper bags often in soapy hot water.
- Wipe your shopping cart handle and the folding seat, railings, arm rests, desks, keypads, computer mouse, telephones, light switches, remote controls, faucets, doorknobs, radios, handbags and other “germ magnets” with a disinfectant wipe.
- Cash, coins, ATM and vending machine buttons, and wallets can give you more than your money’s worth of germs. Use a hand sanitizer after handling them.

Source (Accessed 11/10/10): Cold and Flu? Not you!, <http://cnn.com/2010/HEALTH/11/03/health.avoid.cold.flu/index.html>

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## Do Supplements Help Combat Colds?

Sick days are unpleasant. They also cost us money, since the common cold is one of the main reasons for visiting a doctor and for missing school or work. To fight off colds, everyone looks for ways to strengthen their immune systems. Are various nutritional supplements safe and worth their cost? This month's *Dining on a Dime* explores the science behind three common products.

**Echinacea.** Health experts have not yet determined if echinacea helps prevent or shorten colds. Some limited evidence shows that it may be useful for treating colds in adults, if taken in the early stages of a cold. Many other research studies have shown no benefit to adults or children.

**Zinc.** Warning: Zinc products taken through the nose (such as sprays or gels) may result in permanent damage to your sense of smell. Lozenges are safer.

Zinc supplements have shown potential for treating colds. Research has shown that taking 70 or more mg zinc per day reduces the duration of colds. The best doses and treatment strategies are not yet known. Supplementing with too much zinc can have a negative impact on the immune system. There may not be any benefit for people who already have healthy zinc levels. Food sources of zinc include: oysters, beef, crab, pork, chicken, poultry giblets, lobster, wheat germ, baked beans and other cooked dry beans, and dairy foods.

**Vitamin C.** Vitamin C supplements have shown some promise for treating colds in adults, but researchers have not studied children. Side effects have been reported with high doses of vitamin C supplements. The best doses and treatment strategies are not known. You could safely eat foods naturally rich in vitamin C often. These include: oranges, broccoli, grapefruit, sweet bell peppers, strawberries, Brussels sprouts and papayas.

**What's the bottom line?** There's no good research evidence that any nutritional supplement prevents colds (or flu), or even helps reduce how long and how bad it is if you or your child gets one. If you choose to take a nutritional supplement anyway, keep in mind that they may trigger side effects and can interact with other herbs, supplements or medications. Always take supplements under the supervision of your doctor.

Strive to eat a balanced, healthful diet. Check out the next page for ideas on tasty, satisfying foods to eat.



Source (Accessed 11/16/10): [What the Science Says About CAM and the Common Cold](http://nccam.nih.gov/health/flu/ataglance.htm#coldscience), <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/flu/ataglance.htm#coldscience>

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office. This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call 1-888-369-4777.



## Eat to Beat Illness



How can you choose foods to keep your immune system strong this winter so you're less likely to catch a cold or the flu? Or feel better sooner if you do catch one? Read on, then check out the flu- and cold-fighting winter soup recipe on page 4!

**Eat a high-quality diet.** This is likely to be the strongest weapon in your health arsenal this cold and flu season.

- Drink plenty of liquids, especially water, to stay hydrated.
- Foods high in antioxidants help keep the body strong against illness. Good sources are colorful plant foods, especially the following fruits, vegetables and whole grains: sorghum, berries, unsweetened cocoa powder, nuts, artichokes; pinto, red and black beans; dried fruits, lentils, plums, apples, cherries, red cabbage, pears, broccoli, oats, asparagus, sweet potatoes, beets and beet greens, avocados, oranges, peaches, popcorn, radishes, spinach, potatoes, grapefruit, red onions, red grapes and green tea.
- Omega 3 fats help our immune systems. Fatty fish, walnuts, canola oil and flax seed meal are the best dietary sources of these fats.
- Moderate amounts of high-quality protein (such as fish, lean poultry and meats, eggs, low-fat dairy products, and cooked dry beans) are healthful.

**Spice it up.** Add some of the following ingredients to warm tea, a smoothie made with fruits high in antioxidants, or a colorful vegetable side dish.

- *Chile Peppers* provide a teary-eyed, runny-nosed, throat-clearing sensation. The next time you're congested, try eating some hot peppers or adding a little cayenne pepper or hot sauce to your main dish. If you're feeling achy, know that chiles have anti-inflammatory properties, too!
- *Mint* is a natural source of menthol. A steaming cup of mint tea can temporarily help open clogged sinuses and soothe sore throats. Drinking it throughout the day may help offset the need for decongestants. Its cooling sensation may make you feel better if you're running a fever, too.
- *Most herbs and spices* are good sources of antioxidants, especially cloves, cinnamon, dried oregano, turmeric powder, cumin, dried parsley, dried basil, curry powder, ground ginger, black pepper, chili powder and paprika.
- *Garlic and ginger* have anti-microbial and anti-viral properties that can help soothe your aches and sniffles, and may even help you get well faster.

**Befriend friendly bacteria.** Probiotics are gut-friendly microbes that may strengthen the immune system by crowding out bad germs that make us sick. One study found that healthy adults who ate probiotic foods daily for three months shortened their bouts of the common cold by almost two days and had reduced severity of symptoms. Probiotic-rich foods include: yogurt "with live and active cultures," aged cheeses such as gouda and cheddar, and fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kimchi and kefir.

Sources (Accessed 11/16/10): 1. Cold and Flu? Not you!, <http://cnn.com/2010/HEALTH/11/03/health.avoid.cold.flu/index.html> 2. A Database of the Top Antioxidants, [www.oracvalues.com](http://www.oracvalues.com)

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## ***Dining on a Dime's Cooks' Corner***

### **Winter Soup Supper (Makes 2 servings, 1 1/4 cups each)**

#### **Ingredients**

- 1 tablespoon canola cooking oil
- 1/4 cup chopped red onion
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 1/2 cups reduced-sodium chicken stock or broth
- 1/2 cup each chopped raw sweet potato and white potato
- 1 cup chopped cooked turkey or chicken, without skin
- 1/2 cup chopped broccoli florets
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano leaves
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper or cayenne pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

#### **Directions**

- 1.** In a saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion and garlic. Cook, stirring often, until onion is soft, about 3 minutes.
- 2.** Stir in remaining ingredients. Cover. Bring soup to a boil.
- 3.** Reduce heat. Stirring occasionally, boil soup gently until potatoes are tender, about 20 minutes. Serve hot.
- 4.** Cover and refrigerate, or freeze, leftovers within two hours.

*Nutrition Facts per serving: 260 calories, 10 g total fat, 1.5 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 18 g carbohydrate, 25 g protein, 60 mg cholesterol, 420 mg sodium and 3 g dietary fiber. Daily Values: 100% vitamin A, 35% vitamin C, 4% calcium, 10% iron.*



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