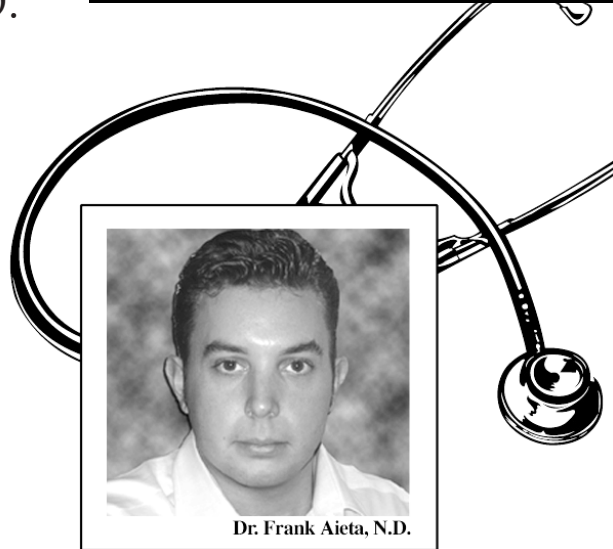


A NATURAL TAKE ON FLU SEASON



Dr. Frank Aieta, N.D.

With the arrival of flu season, I get countless questions from patients asking about things they can do to prevent and treat the flu naturally. There are a variety of clinically tested treatments I recommend to my patients as both preventative measures and treatments.

Almost everyone is familiar with Echinacea and its immune-boosting qualities. The herb recently got some bad press after a study came out showing that it did not help reduce the severity or duration of the common cold, but there are numerous positive studies that show just the opposite. Echinacea has been shown to increase white blood cell activity and help kill virus-infected cells in the body. I have used it clinically for years and can say that it definitely shortens the duration and symptoms of the flu and colds, and helps prevent them in the first place. I typically recommend that patients take it for two weeks on, then one week off, to obtain the maximum immune-enhancing effects.

Another favorite of mine is an herb called elderberry. I will typically use a standardized extract of this herb because of the very positive results studies have shown using this form. Studies show antiviral properties against 10 different strains of the influenza virus, including A and B. In a double-blind, placebo-controlled

trial, people with influenza recovered three times faster when they took one capsule of elderberry extract four times daily, compared to those taking placebo.

The herb Panax Ginseng is another herb that has immune system-stimulating effects and is something I recommend to most patients to help prevent the flu. In one study, the herb was shown to actually improve the efficacy of the flu vaccine, preventing the flu significantly better than in patients who took the vaccine alone.

In addition to these herbs, certain vitamins and minerals also have been shown to help shorten the duration and intensity of the flu.

Most people are familiar with the importance of vitamin C in preventing illnesses like colds and flu. This is something I recommend my patients take daily, year round. Numerous studies have shown the positive effects of vitamin C on the immune system. I typically recommend a maintenance dose of a couple thousand milligrams a day, and as high as 4,000 or 8,000 milligrams split up throughout the day at the first sign of a cold or flu. One very impressive study showed that when vitamin C was given at 1,000 mg, four times a day, cold and flu symptoms were reduced by 85 percent, compared to those who took only pain relievers and decongestants.

I also ensure that my pa-

tients are getting enough of the trace minerals selenium and zinc, which both have been shown to have positive effects on immune health.

Finally, I suggest a specific homeopathic remedy that many of my patients choose in lieu of the flu shot as a preventative. It is called Oscilloccinum, and can be found pretty easily at any health food store. I have found it has been very reliable in preventing the flu. I recommend one dose every two weeks during flu season and one dose two to three times a day at the first onset of symptoms. Three large randomized controlled trials have shown statistically significant results for the treatment of flu using this product.

Along with these suggestions, it is also always important not to forget to eat well, get adequate sleep and remember to take hygienic measures like washing

your hands frequently, especially when around those infected and in public places.

Dr. Frank Aieta is a board certified and licensed naturopathic physician with a private practice in West Hartford, Conn. He specializes in the treatment of disease, using natural therapies such as acupuncture, homeopathy, spinal manipulation, clinical nutrition, and herbal medicine. If there is a specific topic you would like to see addressed in an upcoming column, you can e-mail him at DrAieta@aol.com or visit www.DrAieta.com for additional information

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