

speedy recovery

These all-natural, at-home tricks prove that your family doesn't have to take this cold and flu season lying down.

by Cynthia Ramnarace



Your glassy-eyed child stares up at you, coughs in your face, and then whimpers the words you knew were coming: "I don't feel good." Cold and flu season has officially arrived at your home. While these seasonal maladies take time to run their course, some natural DIY remedies can help speed things along, make your child more comfortable, and increase the chances of a good night's sleep—for both of you.

HEALING FOODS

Honey: A teaspoonful of honey can help halt a nagging cough. Honey (particularly dark, thick buckwheat) is rich in immune-boosting antioxidants that could help *your* honey get better faster. Its thick, smooth consistency also works to coat a raw throat, calming that nagging cough that can make sleep elusive. (Don't give honey to children under 1 year due to the risk of infant botulism, a type of food poisoning.) Adding honey to a cup of hot tea offers even more benefits, says David Grotto, R.D., author of *101 Foods That Could Save Your Life*. "Tea works as a bronchodilator that opens airways and can actually help with breathing," says Grotto.

Chicken soup: If the sound of a sneeze triggers your maternal urge to make chicken soup, there's good reason: Chicken soup is believed to have anti-inflammatory properties that can help shorten a cold. The steam from a hot cup of soup can open nasal passages the same way a hot shower does, and studies also suggest that chicken marrow might have some immune-boosting properties, says Grotto. Season soup with herbs like garlic, ginger, basil, oregano, and cilantro, which can help fight bacteria in the body.

Call your pediatrician if your child's fever is over 103° F, if she has trouble breathing, or if you have trouble waking her. For babies under 6 months, always call a doctor at the first sign of illness.

HOMEOPATHIC REMEDIES

Allium cepa or pulsatilla for colds: For a runny nose and watery eyes, try *allium cepa*, made from red onions (the same ones that make you cry while chopping them). It works by helping your body do more of what it wants to do—create mucus that helps clear the germs from the nose. If your child has yellow or green nasal discharge and is acting clingy, try *pulsatilla*, made from extracts of the anemone flower, which stimulates the production of mucus that's part of the body's germ-killing arsenal.

Oscilloccinum, aconite, or bryonia for flu: If the flu seems to be coming on slowly, try the tongue-twisting *Oscilloccinum*, a homeopathic treatment manufactured by Boiron that can help nip flu-like symptoms in the bud. (Vegetarians should note that it contains animal products.) If symptoms appeared quickly, such as a sudden fever, the National Center for Homeopathy recommends you try *aconite*, a treatment made from the buttercup family of herbs. *Bryonia*, derived from the roots of a flowering cucumber plant, works as an anti-inflammatory in the body, which can help ease flu-associated achy joints and dry cough.



DIY CURES

Saline wash: Help clear nasal passages for easier breathing with saline. A saline wash can cause sneezing, and that sneezing can help eliminate some of the mucus in the upper nasal passages, says Matthew Baral, a naturopathic physician and chair of the department of



pediatric medicine at the Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine in Tempe, Arizona. Once the clogging mucus has been loosened, a thorough nose blowing is needed to get it all out. Teach a reluctant nose blower by first having him blow through his mouth, just like he'd blow out a candle, says Baral. Then have him blow through his teeth with his jaw closed. Next, have him blow with his mouth closed, so the air comes out of his nose.

Wet sock treatment: If a wet blanket can bring a party to a halt, a wet sock could do the same for a cold. It works well for intense congestion in the head and nose by bringing blood flow to the feet, which decreases some of the pressure in the head, says Baral. At bedtime, run a pair of cotton socks under cold water, and squeeze them out. Put them on your child, followed by a pair of dry wool socks. By morning, the socks should be warm, the head congestion eased, and the fever may be broken, too. ●



HOMEOPATHY 101

What is it? Developed in Germany more than 200 years ago, homeopathy is a medical practice based on the principle of “like cures like,” meaning that disease and symptoms can be cured by substances that would cause the same symptoms in healthy people.

Does it work? Homeopathic remedies are made from highly diluted extracts of plants, minerals, or animals, and some people say it's too heavily watered down to be effective—something Timothy Fior, M.D., from the Center for Integral Health, in Lombard, Illinois, refutes. “Even very highly diluted homeopathic remedies have nanoparticles of the original material still in them,” he says. “I've been practicing medicine for 23 years and let me tell you, this stuff works,” says Fior.

Is it safe? Fior points out that homeopathy has been used safely for centuries in people of all ages. As with all treatments, though, consult a health care professional first. Learn more at nationalcenterforhomeopathy.org.

Where can you buy it? Homeopathic remedies are available online through companies like Boiron (boironusa.com), Hyland's (hylands.com), and Heel (heelusa.com), and in natural foods stores. Homeopathic remedies come in a range of forms, including solutions and pellets. Look for the FDA-regulated Homeopathic Pharmacopeia of the United States (HPUS) seal to ensure the brand is safe.