

North American Institute of Medical Herbalism

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See <http://naimh.com/coronavirus>

General advice for nutrition, medicinal herbs, and lifestyle factors during the COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 is a serious illness, and should not be approached with romantic ideals about the “magic” of “natural” remedies. If you are sick with fever, dry cough, fatigue, and especially shortness of breath, consult with a doctor. That said, the following may help.

During prevalence of influenza or other epidemic respiratory virus.

- Make sure your vitamin D levels are normal. The average vitamin D levels in the temperate latitudes in winter fall, due to lower sun exposure, to a level where respiratory illness doubles. If you want a blood test, have your 25(OH)d3 levels tested. If you have not been supplementing at least 4000 IU of vitamin D a day during the winter, you can assume you have a deficiency. It would be appropriate immediately to begin supplementing 7000 IU of vitamin D a day.
- Stay as well rested as possible. Sleep debt leaves the immune system depressed, and one study showed that the body's resistance to influenza was cut in half in those in a state of sleep deprivation.
- Avoid foods which irritate or inflame your system. Some people know they are intolerant of foods such as dairy or gluten. Avoid them strictly during the prevalence of a pandemic.
- Take garlic. The compounds in garlic specifically increase general immunity in the body. More important for respiratory immunity, when the garlic odor is on your breath, the compounds that give you garlic breath also are antimicrobial. Because they are excreted directly to the lung, they can disinfect the entire lower respiratory tract. In clinical trials where even modest amounts of garlic were taken by one group of people and compared to a group who did not take it, the people taking garlic had either fewer respiratory infections, including the common cold or influenza, or milder symptoms, or fewer days lost to work or normal activity. So take lots of it as food. It should not be raw and fresh, some of the beneficial constituents are only formed as the sharpness of the garlic degrades. Make it into sauces or dressings, and have some most days, until it is on your breath.
- **Supplements.** The acronym for the nutrients that support normal immunity is ZACES. That stands for Zinc, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E, and selenium. One or more of these is either deficient or suboptimal in most individuals in North America. Simple supplementation of the normal dietary allowances is sufficient, taking more will not help more once the requirement is met. You can take Zinc as lozenges, which helps with respiratory infection. Vitamin A is typically not deficient in North American populations. You can take 1000 mg of vitamin C a day. 100 or 200 IU of vitamin E. and 200 mcg of selenium.

If you think you are exposed *Everyone* may assume this at this time of the COVID epidemic that they are potentially exposed. Symptoms typically appear about 5 days after exposure, but an individual may pass on the virus before any symptoms set in. Before the first case in your community is identified, it is also circulating in ten times more people than that, and by the time the first patient is hospitalized you can be sure that many dozens more have acquired mild illness.

- **Echinacea tincture.** You don't need huge doses, small *regular* doses are more important than large doses. Take 10-15 drops of the tincture each 2-3 hours. If you are alcohol intolerant or avoid it, take powdered echinacea capsules. One capsule every 3-4 hours.
- **Myrrh tincture.** Like Echinacea, Myrrh is a general stimulant to the immune system. Take it with the echinacea in a similar dose.
- **Elderberry syrup** A common brand name is Sambucol. Take it as it says on the label. Take a dose every 4 hours. There is currently some bad information going around that Elderberry is contraindicated in COVID, and this is false information circulated by some individuals without scientific training who misinterpreted some laboratory studies.
- **Boneset tincture.** 15-30 drops every 3 hours. The plant is *Eupatorium perfoliatum*. During the period from about 1800 to 1920, this plant was used by physicians in North America of all schools of medicine, and was considered the most important medicine in epidemic influenza, and also other viral infections such as dengue fever. Boneset enhances host resistance to viral infection, and also reduces inflammatory damage that might be caused by an infection. Not for long term use, never in pregnancy, lactation, or for children under the age of 7.
- You can take some or all of the above and gain benefit. You can also **combine** the above in a formula for ease of use. Open a bottle of sambucol, empty out half of it into another bottle to store. Then fill up the empty space in the bottle with 1/3 echinacea tincture, 1/3 myrrh tincture, and 1/3 boneset tincture. Take ½ to 1 tsp every 2-4 hours.
- **Continue to take garlic!**

Symptomatic disease

The most common symptoms are low grade fever, fatigue and muscle aches, and dry cough. Some patients do not have these but have digestive symptoms at onset, such as diarrhea. The onset seems mild, like a cold, then gradually progresses to more symptoms, higher fever, worsening cough and shortness of breath. If symptomatic, even low grade, IMMEDIATELY assess whether this person is high risk, which includes individuals over 65, those with diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, cancer, taking immuno-suppressive drugs, or those with chronic lung conditions such as asthma. Young people with such conditions, including asthma, are at high risk as well as elders. About one patient in five may develop symptoms that require hospitalization. Do not take a romantic idea about the magical properties of natural medicine with this disease. Many patients will feel shortness of breath when this virus infects the lung. The key sign that a trip to the hospital is indicated with *difficulty breathing*.

The three most important considerations from natural medicine are:

- Stay in bed or otherwise rest until it is over. The symptoms may come and go, it may seem to be gone then come back stronger a day later. The natural cycle of the body's response to this disease appears to be about 10 days. If you have symptoms, rest for ten days.
- Fast during the fever. Liquids only. Water, tea (herbal or other), coffee (now is not the time to go through withdrawal), lightly lemoned water. A liter bottle with Lemon Balm tea (1 cup) in the bottom and then filled to the top with water. The digestive system shuts down during fever, and beneficial hormones are secreted by the empty gut wall that modify inflammation and prevent excessive fever. This is ancient advice and proven and reproven in my teaching communities for more than 40 years. The fever is typically lower and goes away sooner with this strategy.
- Do not take aspirin, ibuprofen, or other drugs to lower a fever. Most of these drugs which turn off inflammation also turn down specifically antiviral immunity. Take a warm bath or not shower instead,

You can find more information on this here: <http://naimh.com/coronavirus>

And interview with me on preparation and natural therapeutics for the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://anchor.fm/wildspirit/episodes/Paul-Bergner-Full-Interview-Bonus-eb6pvt?fbclid=IwAR2hXWvCCMVB-8RT03qPOyD-rmQ5pmVvuxeoDTaqFiYPEIFWAF4Ax2IH06g>

Paul Bergner is director of the North American Institute of Medical Herbalism and editor of the *Medical Herbalism* journal. He has practiced nutrition and medical herbalism since 1973. He has trained more than 400 student residents in teaching clinics for clinical nutrition and medical herbalism since 1996. He has taught both medical herbalism and clinical nutrition at both the undergraduate and graduate levels of the university, and has developed and delivered more than 500 hours of Continuing Education for herbalists, nutritionists, acupuncturists, nurses, and naturopathic physicians. He is author of the *Healing Power of Garlic*, the *Healing Power of Echinacea*, *Goldenseal and the Immune Herbs*, *The Healing Power of Minerals and Trace Elements*, and four other books on herbalism, nutrition, ethnobotany, Chinese medicine, and naturopathic medicine.