

# The Gift of Good Health

By Woodland Publishing, Inc.

Millions of Americans suffer from at least one bout of the flu or cold each year. If you think you'll avoid the flu or cold this year, don't get too smug. According to experts, cold and flu season officially lasts until April. The peak flu season for most states is yet to come in January.

This year the H1N1 influenza (or "swine flu") has appeared in several states. Although human infections are ongoing, most people infected with this virus recover without requiring medical treatment, just as they would from a seasonal flu virus. To protect yourself, get the H1N1 flu vaccine along with the seasonal flu vaccine, especially if you are at higher risk for infection (visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) to find locations that offer the vaccine in your area). The CDC also advises everyone to follow public health advice, such as adhering to public school closures and avoiding crowds of people.

In addition to the flu viruses, health experts are also concerned about the common cold. A. Mark Fendrick, M.D., told *WebMD* that "A cold is the most commonly occurring illness in humans...there are approximately 500 million colds each year in the U.S." What can you do to stay healthy?

## 1. **Stop it before it starts**

Wash your hands, drink plenty of fluids, breathe fresh air, exercise regularly, take a multivitamin, and eat yogurt. Why yogurt? The beneficial bacteria in yogurt may stimulate the production of substances that fight disease.

## 2. **Learn when to let things be.**

When a cold or the flu strikes, a common reaction is to treat symptoms immediately. However, doctors suggest that some symptoms may be a crucial part of the healing process. For example, a fever is the body's way of trying to kill viruses. So if you get a fever and can endure a moderate one (don't let it go above 102 degrees Fahrenheit) for a few days, you may get well faster.

## 3. **Stay warm and rested.**

Resting when you first become afflicted with the cold or flu is important. Why? Because the body needs energy for battling illness. Give yourself a break and let your body do the work of fighting off the illnesses by getting enough sleep. Staying home from work or school can also prevent you from spreading the virus to others!

## 4. **Eat fruits and vegetables.**

It's always a good idea to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, but it's especially important when battling a "bug." Produce contains "phytonutrients," (nutrients from plants), such as antioxidants that can help the body fight off illness.

## 5. **Try natural remedies first.**

When symptoms first appear, consider taking plenty of **vitamin C**. Vitamin C is a well-known nutrient for battling the cold and flu. It also contains powerful antiviral and immunostimulatory capabilities..

If you're coughing and battling the common cold, take **garlic**. Garlic has antibiotic, antiviral, antifungal, and antiparasitic properties and boosts the immune system by offering resistance to infection and stress.

## 6. **Grandma was right.**

Chicken soup, garlic and hot tea all show promise in treating the first signs of a cold or a flu, and also can provide relief from congestion and inflammation symptoms. Other remedies to try are saltwater or horseradish and honey gargles, saltwater nasal rinses and breathing steam in any form (saunas, showers, or a bowl of steaming water).

By taking care of yourself and stocking up on a few important items, you will have all the ammunition you need to battle the cold and flu for the rest of the season.