

Facts on the Flu

by HOMEOPATHY TODAY STAFF

Q What's the best way to avoid the flu?

The healthier your immune system, the better your chances of warding off the flu, so get enough sleep, eat well, drink enough water, and reduce stress. The flu virus is easily removed with soap and water, so remember to wash your hands often, paying special attention to the area under your nails. And don't touch your nose, eyes, or mouth with unwashed hands.

Q Will a flu shot lower the risk of Bird Flu?

No. The vaccine developed for the current flu season was created to provide immunity to entirely different strains of flu.

Q Will a flu shot lower the risk of catching other flus?

Possibly. Each year, public health officials guess which strains to put into the season's flu vaccine. If they guess correctly, it is estimated that the vaccine may provide 70–80% temporary immunity in healthy people under 65, and 30–40% immunity to those older than 65. If they guess incorrectly, the vaccine may provide no immunity. Recent studies have called into question the use of flu vaccines for children and the elderly, since they found limited or no evidence of effectiveness.* Many people are also concerned about preservatives present in vaccines, along with vaccine side effects.

Q Can I use homeopathic medicines to prevent the flu?

For more than 150 years, many homeopaths have used the remedy *Influenzinum* as a preventive against the flu. It is a safe, highly diluted preparation made from viral strains in the flu vaccine. Although there are no statistically significant studies, some research in France, England, and India along with clinical experience suggest that it may provide some immunity. The recommended dosage schedule varies from practitioner to practitioner: some suggest weekly doses during flu season, some suggest monthly doses, and others suggest weekly doses for one month (October), followed by monthly doses during the rest of the season. Suggested potency is typically between 9c and 30c.

Also, if a flu epidemic exists and a *genus epidemicus* remedy is identified (i.e., a remedy that is helping most cases of flu during the epidemic), that remedy can be taken *preventively* by others who might be exposed to the flu. This method of homeopathic prescribing was first described by Hahnemann.

Q I think I'm coming down with the flu ...

Oscillococcinum® has been proven in placebo-controlled studies to reduce or eliminate symptoms of flu when taken early—at the first sign of flu symptoms/within the first 48 hours. Take 2–3 doses, 4–8 hours apart.

Q What if I already have the flu?

Homeopaths treat each case of flu on an individual basis, and there are many possible remedies that might fit your case depending on your specific symptoms. Some of these remedies have been mentioned in the previous article; four of the most common remedies are detailed in the box on page 32. Visit the NCH Flu Tracker at www.homeopathic.org or see the books mentioned below for details on additional remedies. Always seek professional help for serious flu symptoms.

Q What remedies are working during this season?

The NCH Flu Tracker is a sophisticated tool for sharing your experiences in treating the flu as well as for learning what remedies may be working in your area. If the 2005–06 flu season is a bad one, the NCH Flu Tracker can be a life saver—but in order for it to be effective, practitioners and others need to use it! Please visit www.homeopathic.org today and check out the valuable resources there.

Q Where can I learn more?

For many more articles and references about the flu, visit the NCH Flu Tracker at www.homeopathic.org. You may also wish to refer to the following books on the subject: *Flu: Alternative Treatments and Prevention* by Randall Neustaedter, OMD, CA; *Homeopathy For Epidemics: Homeopathy in times of crisis* by Eileen Nauman, DHM, DIHom; and *The Homeopathic Treatment of Influenza: Special Bird Flu Edition*, by Sandra J. Perko, PhD.

* Jefferson T., Rivetti D., et al., "Efficacy and Effectiveness of Influenza Vaccines in Elderly People: A Systematic Review," *The Lancet*, October 1, 2005.

Jefferson T., Smith S., et al., "Assessment of the efficacy and effectiveness of influenza vaccines in healthy children: systematic review," *The Lancet*, Feb 26–Mar 4, 2005.

