

Vaccine shortage!

Steps you can take to prevent the flu

by Stephen A. Messer, ND, DHANP

YOU'VE SEEN THE NEWS REPORTS: senior citizens waiting in long lines for hours to get their flu shots, medical providers under fire for hoarding flu vaccine, and other signs of widespread panic.

This year we are caught in the midst of a medical snafu of major proportions. As almost everyone has heard, Chiron, a manufacturer of the influenza vaccine, had their production shut down by regulatory agencies in Great Britain. As a result, the US is 50 million influenza immunizations short this year. The vaccine is being rationed and the government recommends that only the very young, the very old, those with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women, nursing home residents, and health care workers (who can spread the virus) receive the shot—because there is a much greater likelihood of serious illness or death if they contract the flu.

Healthy young people are at less risk for these serious complications, but the flu could still mean a week or more out of work and the misery that goes with that: muscle aches, headaches, cough, fever, chills, and malaise. Sometimes it can take weeks before a person fully regains their energy after a flu. Furthermore, I occasionally see patients who've never been well since the flu; they can date the start of their chronic fatigue, asthma, or other condition to a bout with the flu many years earlier.

Reduce your risk

There are other ways, besides the flu vaccine, to reduce your risk of catching this infectious disease. The first are commonsense measures that you'll see publicized everywhere. Be sure to eat sensibly, get enough sleep, cut back on stress, take your vitamins, and probably most importantly, wash your hands frequently and for at least 20 seconds—enough time to get through humming a short song like *Happy Birthday to You*, twice. [See Dr. Rothenberg's article for more good advice, page 20.]

Preventive prescribing

In addition to these recommendations, homeopathy has a long history of the use of nosodes (homeopathic remedies prepared from disease products*) to protect people during epidemics. The nosode used to protect against the flu is *Influenzinum*—a homeopathic preparation made from the influenza vaccine or viruses.

Although there have been no definitive clinical trials to demonstrate the effectiveness or safety, reports from homeopaths who've used *Influenzinum* over the years have been good. Last year, we encouraged all of our 350 students at the Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine, as well as our staff and administrative personnel to take Dolivaxil™ (*Influenzinum* 9c, made by Dolisos) as

directed on the package. We seemed to experience a much lower incidence of flu among this group. However, there seemed to be about 10% of people who tried this that had some sort of uncomfortable reaction, usually flu-like symptoms which most often lasted for a few hours to two days. [See Dr. Neustaedter's article for more, page 16.]

Another method of using homeopathy to prevent epidemic disease like the flu, has been called "*genus epidemicus*" prescribing. For a longer discussion of this, as well as homeopathic prophylaxis in general, please refer to Dr. Todd Hoover's excellent article, "Homeopathic Prophylaxis: Fact Or Fiction" at the "Articles" section of the NCH Flu Tracker web pages, www.homeopathic.org.

This method requires the homeopathic practitioner to treat a number of cases of the flu in a given locality and a given year. The cases are considered together as a whole, and the best remedy for the most important characteristic symptoms of the cases is determined. If this remedy proves efficacious in treating a majority of sick individuals during the epidemic, then it can be tried *preventatively* on people who have not yet come down with the disease. When I practiced in Oregon, the *genus epidemicus* for the flu one year seemed to be *Nux vomica*; it worked wonderfully to treat—as well as prevent the flu for those patients who took it prophylactically.

Dealing with the flu

Once a person comes down with the flu, the best thing to do is to carefully take the case and prescribe the homeopathic remedy that best fits that patient's disease. If there is no skilled homeopathic practitioner available, you might consider using *Oscillocochinum*®, available in most natural food stores. Studies have shown that it can reduce the length and severity of the flu. Take as directed on the package, and remember that in order to get these good results, it is important to begin the medicine at the first sign of the flu. [See Dr. Neustaedter's article for more on this remedy and others, page 16.]

Finally, if you do come down with the flu, try to limit other's exposure to the illness. Wash your hands frequently, cover your mouth and nose completely when you cough and sneeze, preferably with a tissue, and then wash your hands afterwards. And don't "be a hero"—stay home from work or school, until all the symptoms are gone. 🍀

* In the preparation of homeopathic remedies, the original source substance (plant, mineral, animal product, or disease product) is greatly diluted; therefore, homeopathic remedies are extremely safe.



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