

As autumn and winter approach we are already in the midst of an active flu season. I have been getting constant questions about what to do to try to prevent influenza and of course, if someone contracts it, how to treat it. In addition to common sense good hygiene practices, I think there are two important herbal things that can be done to help prevent contracting either strain of flu (the Swine flu or the regular seasonal flu).

The first is strengthening the immune system and this can be done with immuno-potentiating herbs such as Echinacea, Turkey Tail, and Maitake, or it can be done through the use of adaptogens. Adaptogens are herbs that strengthen the HPA axis, thus helping to enhance endocrine, immune, and nervous system function. As I mention in my book *Adaptogens, Herbs for Strength, Stamina, and Stress Relief*, my Revitalizing Ginseng Soup is especially useful to help prevent getting sick during the transition from autumn to winter.

David Winston's Revitalizing Ginseng Soup

1 large onion, diced
4-6 cloves garlic, minced
2 large carrots, peeled and sliced into rounds
2-3 boneless chicken breasts cut into ½ inch chunks
Olive or sesame oil
8 cups water or stock
1 large sweet potato, peeled and cubed
12-16 dried shiitake mushrooms (black mushroom). Soak first in water to hydrate.
1 small (1/2 inch) piece fresh ginger, minced
1-2 whole red or white ginseng roots
1 ounce lycium fruit
3-4 astragalus sticks
salt or tamari, pepper, and hot oil to taste

The other herbal protocol for helping to prevent influenza is a traditional Chinese herb formula known as Jade Windscreen. This simple Chinese formula has been used for millennia to help prevent febrile illnesses.

Herbs used to prevent the flu are very different than the ones we'd use to treat the flu. In my next note, I'll talk about more about some of my ideas on the treatment of influenza.