

Enemies of the Common Cold

Diet, nutrition and exercise can help break the cycle of recurring colds.

Q. I get either a cold or a sinus infection almost every month. How can I prevent this?

—W.S., Roswell, Georgia

A. I believe you will see an improvement if you incorporate three key elements of good health into your lifestyle: diet, nutrition and exercise.

The most important advice, perhaps, that I can give you for this condition is dietary. You should eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables—especially cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and brussels sprouts. Eat more whole grains, and avoid processed meats such as hot dogs and luncheon meats, which have ingredients that are potentially cancer-causing. Replace them in your diet with fish, chicken, turkey and occasional lean meats (it's best to choose free-range meats).

Choose extra-virgin olive oil in place of other fats. Avoid the “killer” fats—the hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated fats usually contained in margarine, shortening, and many peanut butters and packaged foods.

Eliminate sugar from your diet as much as possible. It can suppress the immune system for as long as six hours. This includes white table sugar, of course; but you should avoid the high sugar content in processed orange, grape and apple juices, and most other juices, as well.

If you continue to drink these, cut down your portions to 4-

ounce servings or dilute them with water. By all means avoid the sweetener aspartame, which is broken down in the body to methanol and eventually formaldehyde.

Eliminate milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, ice cream and other forms of dairy foods from your diet. Many of my patients have gotten relief simply by avoiding all sugary and dairy foods.

There are several nutritional supplements that I believe will help you as well. Take approximately 250-500 mg (milligrams) of vitamin C (especially buffered vitamin C) three times a day. For recurrent sinus infections I recommend you take olive leaf extract, approximately 500 mg three times a day, and a plant sterol—or plant fat—called Moducare, one or two tabs three times a day, 30 minutes before meals.

The herb Samento is extremely effective against sinus infections. Take one tab three times a day. Most of these supplements can be found in health food stores.

Be sure to make time for adequate rest, at least eight hours' sleep, as this will help strengthen your immune system. Drink 64 ounces to 80 ounces of filtered water a day and decrease the stress in your life. Exercise, too, such as a brisk walk for about 20 minutes four times a week.

Q. I have mitral valve prolapse, heart palpitations and irregular heartbeats. How can I alleviate this?

—L.B., Wheatland, Wyoming

A. Mitral valve prolapse is a mild abnormality of the mitral valve of the heart. One or both of the mitral valve flaps doesn't close as securely as it should, and this commonly

produces a “click” or a “murmur.” It can cause palpitations, skipped or irregular heartbeats, chest pains and other symptoms.

In fact, just sensing that you are experiencing an irregular heartbeat can cause enough anxiety for your body to release excessive adrenaline, causing rapid heart rate, palpitations, high blood pressure, anxiety, panic attacks or the feeling that one is having a heart attack.

People with this are commonly sensitive to caffeine, chocolate, decongestants, appetite suppressants and herbs recommended for energy or weight loss.

Effective treatment for this condition involves regular aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking daily for 20-30 minutes. This not only conditions the heart but also helps to dissipate the adrenaline. Simply learning how to relax will help.

Diet is very important. Avoid caffeine, chocolate, MSG, stimulants and aspartame. You should eat every three to four hours because low blood-sugar, or hypoglycemia, can cause a release of adrenaline.

The most effective nutrient for mitral valve prolapse probably is magnesium, in the form of magnesium glycinate or magnesium aspartate. Take approximately 200-400 mg two or three times a day (decrease the dose if you develop diarrhea).