

COMMON COLDS AND 'FLU

Influenza was first described by Hippocrates, 412 B.C.

It was first coined influenza in Italy in 1743. Its literal meaning being 'influenced by the stars' the common belief being it was astral in origin. In Italy it was also named 'La Grippe'.

It is a highly contagious respiratory virus occurring in epidemics.

Symptoms vary but fever, exhaustion, muscular aches, catarrh, sore throat, headaches often occur. In itself it isn't usually life threatening but it can turn into pneumonia, often with a secondary bacterial infection gaining entrance through the damaged nasal membranes.

The last four pandemics, 1918 Spanish 'flu which killed over 20 million humans, the 1957 Asian 'flu, the 1968 Hong Kong 'flu and 2003 SARS 'flu all originated in Asia. Interestingly the 1743 outbreak may well have done also as Italy had strong trade links with China; pasta being a copy of Chinese noodles.

Bird 'flu is nothing new. 'Flu usually starts in ducks and birds. Traditional Chinese farming often keep ducks and pigs together sometimes with chickens as well. The pigs eat the duck and bird droppings.

The bird 'flu usually isn't transmittable from ducks or chickens to humans. It is however transmittable to pigs where it mutates and then the new strain passes onto humans.

How does 'flu spread from China so quickly? Probably Airlines and now birds.

H5NI bird 'flu killed 6 people in 1997, it originated in Hong Kong.

In 2004 human death toll in Vietnam and Thailand was 23. It also spread to pigs in Vietnam.

In 2005 a further outbreak killed 50 mainly in Vietnam. It spread to pigs in Indonesia in May 2005 and by birds as far as Cyprus, Italy and Germany by February 2006.

The real risk of a major pandemic is probably not bird to human but bird to pig where mutation takes place and pig to human in a new form that can be transmitted from human to human.

Western medicines approach is in 'flu vaccines, anti-biotics to deal with secondary bacterial infection and anti pyretics to reduce fever. What is the natural medicine approach?

Most parents see a fever as a frightening unwanted aspect of 'flu. In natural medicine we see the symptoms of a disease as being caused by the body fighting the disease. We want to defeat the disease so do not simply attempt to get rid of the symptoms.

Why get rid of a fever? A fever is the bodies own attempt to rid itself of an infection. Fevers can be caused by viruses, bacteria, funghi and toxins.

In the Baltimore Study 21% of parents thought a temperature of 102° (38.9°C) could produce brain damage. At Boston City Hospital even 60% of paediatricians thought a temperature of 104° could lead to seizure, brain damage or death.

Fever is in fact proof of the immune system successfully fighting an infection. It can easily be argued that a fever unchecked will clearly 'cure' the infection and that lowering a fever will just prolong an acute illness into a longer chronic condition.

An American study showed those who used drugs (paracetamol etc) to lower a fever prolonged their flu by an average of 3½ days. An analysis of 218 patients with bacterial blood poisoning showed that those with the highest temperature on day one had the best survival rates.

NATURAL REMEDIES FOR COLDS AND 'FLU

- Bed Rest
- Drink lots of water
- Do not eat sugar (sugar switches off the immune response for up to 6 hours).
- Black elderberry extract (sambucus nigra) shortens the duration and lessens the symptoms of 'flu. It shortened the duration of 'flu symptoms from 7.1 days to 3.1 days. It appears from research that black elderberry stops viruses from entering healthy cells.
"Sambucol" is a raspberry flavoured black elderberry extract designed for children
- Goldenseal (Hydrastis Canadensis). Goldenseal is a potent herb that suppresses both viruses and bacterial infections. It contains the alkaloids berberine and hydrastine. It was used by the native American Cherokee tribe. It works wonderfully well for 'flu but it is potentially toxic to foetuses so should not be used by anyone who may be pregnant
- Echinacea. Echinacea kicks in the immune system. The Plains Indians of North America used it for sore throats, mumps and measles. It boosts various immune responses
- Zinc. Zinc lozenges have been found to shorten the duration of colds from 7.6 days to 4.4 days.
- Vitamin C. This increases immune system response

FOR RECOVERING FROM EXHAUSTION AFTER 'FLU 'POST VIRAL FATIGUE'

- CO ENZYME Q10 enables cells to turn sugar into energy inside each cell
- Astragalus, a chinese herb available in capsule form, helps you recover from lack of energy and fatigue following 'flu

SUMMARY

You must decide whether to allow a fever to run its course or reduce it with Paracetamol, Aspirin or Ibuprofen

- Drink lots of water
- Never give a child aspirin. A febrile child if given aspirin can develop Reye's Syndrome, often fatal. Reye's Syndrome produces brain inflammation, raised intracranial pressure and damage to liver and other organs

This advice is not meant to replace specific medical advice. It is intended to provide general information only.

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