

Herbs for Fall and Winter Wellness

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Some important insights arise when immune system function is viewed from an ecological perspective, not simply a biochemical or medical one. Human immunity is a vital component of the interface between the individual and the world. The role of the human immune system is not simply to resist the dangers present in the environment. Rather, it is part of the complex and beautiful dance of elements flowing back and forth between the human body and the rest of the world. Seen within the context of ecology, both human and environmental, immunity is about harmony. David Hoffman

Winter is a time for being especially mindful of our energy reserves. It is the season to draw our energy inward and refill the deep well that contains our chi. If we move from winter into spring feeling rested and revitalized, then summer will feel energetic and expansive, and autumn will feel abundant and satisfying. If we have been unable to rest sufficiently in winter and be nourished by food, family, community, and safe and meaningful work, then over time we begin to lack the chi needed to feel healthy and vital.

1) Surface Immune Activation, non-specific immune response, primarily involves the secretory system (phagocytes, monocytes, macrophages) for acute conditions.

2) Deeper Immune Activation, specific immune response, maintains inner ecology (homeostasis), cellular immunity and surveillance of rogue cells.

3) Endocrine Immune Response through the use of adaptogen herbs. *"Russian scientists say that adaptogen herbs increase the resistance within the body to a wide range of stressors and normalize functions. Western researchers look at how adaptogens regulate the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis."* David Winston

If you have an autoimmune condition, experience hypersensitive reactions to various substances, or have an organ transplant, please address your condition with a holistically minded health care professional before using herbs.

Surface Immune Herbs

Calendula flower (*Calendula officinalis*) astringent, eases inflammation, lymphatic, vulnerary. Tea, tincture, infused oil, salve, healing baths

Echinacea root, leaf and flower (*Echinacea purpurea*) antimicrobial, anti-viral. Prevent and treat the common cold, flu, upper respiratory infections when used frequently at the onset. Supportive for ear infections, bronchitis, sinusitis, tonsillitis, laryngitis, cystitis. Topically to enhance wound healing.
Tea, tincture, root glycerite, oil, salve

Elder flower and berry (*Sambucus canadensis*)

Flower: anti-catarrhal, clears blocked Eustachian tubes, diaphoretic. **Berry: anti-viral**
Tea, tincture, glycerite, syrup

Garlic (*Allium sativum*) anti-fungal, anti-microbial, diaphoretic, hypotensive

Ginger root (*Zingiber officinalis*) anti-microbial, anti-spasmodic, aromatic carminative, diaphoretic, pungent-appetite stimulant. Fresh tea eases motion sickness, nausea associated with pregnancy and chemo-induced nausea.
Fresh root tea, glycerite, tincture

Sacred basil, Holy basil (*Ocimum sanctum*)

Pungent, bitter, warm, dry, aromatic qualities help clear dampness from lungs, reduce fevers and flu, ease gas, clears gut of toxins, warms and stimulates digestion, lowers cortisol levels, eases anxiety, rebuilds resiliency, increases prana/vital life force. Opens and harmonizes the heart and mind. Engenders feeling of compassion and devotion.

Fresh or dried tea, fresh tincture, fresh glycerite, honey

Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)

Enhances immunity and relieves colds, coughs, sore throats, sinusitis, flu and fevers. Antiseptic and antimicrobial. Breaks up mucous and helps resolve infection in the lungs. Pungent and bitter qualities help improve poor digestion (low agni) and absorption and clears toxins from the gut. Combine with Echinacea, elderberry and ginger.

Usnea lichen: antibacterial, anti-fungal, reduces inflammation and lung spasms. Tincture taken internally is strongly antibacterial for hot/damp lung infections, hot/damp pneumonia (with elecampane and garlic). Topically in salve or vaginal bolus for vaginal candida, chlamydia, trichomonas and bacterial vaginosis in combination with calendula and goldenseal.

Deeper Immune Herbs

Astragalus root (*Astragalus membranaceus*) adaptogen(mild), antioxidant, chi tonic, hepato-protective, immune tonic (prevents colds, flu, bronchitis) and strengthens lung qi which helps create the wei qi. In Chinese medicine the wei qi is the protective energy that helps prevent illness caused by external pernicious influences.

Codonopsis root (*Codonopsis pillosa*) chi tonic, demulcent, expectorant, strengthens digestion, improves appetite, improves overall energy and immunity following an illness-especially when combined with astragalus.

Reishi mushroom (*Ganoderma lucidum*) adaptogen, anti-bacterial, supports healthy blood pressure, reduces inflammation, anti-viral, expectorant, reduces allergic reactions, eases asthma, hepato-protective, immune tonic and bone marrow tonic.

Schisandra berries (*Schisandra chinensis*)

Strengthens respiratory weaknesses and resolves chronic coughs and supports allergic asthma with wheezing. Begin using 2 months ahead of winter if you are prone to respiratory infections or weakened immunity. Nourishes kidneys. Calming, eases anxiety, reduces stress-induced heart palpitations. Supportive herb for women experiencing menopausal symptoms such as anxiety, memory loss, insomnia, heart palpitations. (avoid during pregnancy)

Shiitake mushroom (*Lentinus edodes*) anti-viral, hepato-protective, hyperlipidemia (lowers cholesterol and blood lipids). Reduces elevated liver enzymes-used with hepatitis B and C. Strengthens immune response, lessening frequency of colds and bronchitis. Supportive to a person with allergies, chronic fatigue, herpes simplex I and II.

Avena Botanicals is back mixing and selling our well-respected Immune Broth-a combination of certified organic and wild-harvested herbs and mushrooms (astragalus, codonopsis, burdock root, reishi and shiitake mushrooms) that deeply support the Immune system-especially through the fall and winter months. Cook 24-48 hours, strain and freeze into ice cubes. Use one ice cube/day in soup or in a cup of miso.