



# Wholistic Pediatrics

Primary Care, Allergies, Autism, ADHD, and Related Disorders

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## Preventing and Treating the Flu

*Note: This information is not intended to replace a physician/patient contact. It is for general purposes only.*

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Influenza is a virus that typically begins to appear in the Fall and then recedes as Spring progresses. Although it has many of the same symptoms as a common cold, it often starts with a high spiking fever, shaking chills, headache, muscle ache, and pain when moving the eyes. Emergency warning signs in children include: fast breathing or trouble breathing, bluish skin color, dehydration, not waking up or interacting, and being very irritable. Emergency warning signs in adults include: difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, and severe or persistent vomiting.

For the most up to date information about the Swine Flu, the CDC has established a webpage ([http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/general\\_info.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/general_info.htm)) that is very detailed and is constantly being updated. If you want to be kept up to date, you can enter your email address on that page and you will be sent updates as they are published.

There is a possibility that the “Swine Flu” that is starting to go around may hit a large percentage of our population, as this new strain had not been included in the flu vaccine this year. It is believed that this past year’s flu vaccine may still provide some coverage against this strain due to cross-reactivity, but most people are probably not going to be immune. At this point there is no indication that this strain of the flu is more deadly than a typical flu, and each year about 36,000 Americans die from influenza-related complications. For perspective on this number, around 42,000 Americans die from automobile related injuries each year.

At this point the best way to prevent the spread of flu is through good hand washing, avoiding people who have flu-like symptoms, for people who have questionable or definite symptoms to avoid being out in public, and to have a healthy diet with adequate intake of vitamins and minerals. At the end of this article are some recommendations for supplements that can be used as a preventive measure. Please note the addition of the Vitamin D information; this is a new recommendation that was not included in previous editions of my flu article.

There are 2 anti-viral medications that appear to be effective against the swine flu. Tamiflu can be used in adults and children over 1 year old, and Relenza is available for people over 7 years old. The effectiveness for both of these significantly declines if started after the second day of symptoms. These medications are not necessary to recover from the swine flu, and most of the initial cases in the USA were not treated with these medicines and they recovered.

There are several supplements that I have found to be helpful in minimizing the effects of the flu. These therapies are most effective when started **immediately** upon the first signs or symptoms,

and with the exception of the Vitamin A, should be continued for several days after symptoms subside. We have made these remedies available at Wholistic Pediatrics, and I recommend getting these products now as part of a “flu-preparedness kit”. One bottle of Elderberry and one box of Oscillococcinum is needed for each person to have a full round of therapy, but the other supplements come in larger amounts and can be shared within the family. For women who are pregnant, taking the doses listed for young children are probably safe, but this has not been established by medical studies.

### **Therapies for when coming down with Flu Symptoms:**

1) **Elderberry** - An herb that appears to have direct anti-influenza viral activity. Children as young as 6 months of age can use this (although some people have used the product in younger children). There are many elderberry products on the market. I have found good success with the encapsulated liquid extract (Phyto-Caps) from Gaia/Professional Solutions. The dose for older children and adults is 2 capsules 3 times a day. For younger children and people who do not swallow pills, I am recommending Sambucus, (by Nature’s Way) which is an updated version of Sambucol. Younger children should take 1 teaspoon 4 times a day, and older children and adults should take 2 teaspoons 4 times a day.

2) **Oscillococcinum** - A homeopathic remedy that has been shown to be effective in small studies. I have personally had success with this product, although some families are concerned about the lactose/casein content. If it really seemed like flu was going through my community, I would strongly consider using it. Each small vial contains little sugar pellets (containing lactose) that are most effective if allowed to dissolve under the tongue. Three doses a day for 2 days is the recommended amount. Small children can chew the pellets if necessary. For the youngest children, give a few at a time to make sure they can handle it. Another alternative is to dissolve the pellets in about ½ teaspoon of warm water, and then give this slowly, a few drops at a time so that there is more contact with the oral lining. As with any homeopathic remedy, it is most effective when given away from food, herbs, or strong flavors like mint or cinnamon in toothpaste.

3) **Vitamin A-** in a mycelized natural or palmitate form, (instead of one that is mostly Beta Carotene) Vitamin A seems to have strong anti-viral activity. High doses should never be used for more than 2 days in a row. The liver can be damaged if used for long periods of time at these doses. The dosing provided here is anecdotal, based upon my and other doctors’ experience. Studies have not been done to confirm them. The amount give per dose: for children under 6 months, 10000 IU; children 6-12 months, 15000 IU; children 12-24 months, 20000 IU; children 2-3 years, 25000-30000 IU; children 5-7 years; 50000 IU; children 7-10, 75000 IU; children 11-14, 100000 IU; and people 15 and older, 150,000 IU. These doses are to be used twice a day for 2 days only. These high doses may be problematic for people with clotting difficulty or liver disease. It is advisable to give/take a ½ dose when not sick to make sure it is tolerated. There are both liquid drops and capsules available.

4) **Vitamin C-** preferably as Ester C or Buffered C. Doses listed here are the total amount per day and should be divided in 3-4 doses. For children under 1 year of age give 100mg per month of age. For children up to age 5, 1000mg per year of age, and as much as possible for older children and adults, as long as the stool does not become loose.

5) **Zinc** – this mineral should be given divided into at least 2 doses spread through the day. For children under 2 months to 1 year old give 10-15mg a day, for children between 1 and 3 give 20-30 mg daily, for older children give 50 mg a day, and adults can take 75-100 mg a day. This should be divided into 2-3 doses throughout the day.

6) **Larix** - This is an herb derived from the bark of the Western Larch tree. The active ingredient, arabinogalactan, is the same as Echinacea, which is believed to increase production of white blood

cells. Larix has been found to be much stronger than Echinacea when using similar amounts, and can be used by patients over 6 months of age. For adults and older children, the dose is 2 tablets 3 times a day, and younger children who can swallow pills should give 1 tablet 3 times a day. There is also a powder available. Adults and large children should use 1 tablespoon 3 times a day, and smaller children should use 1 teaspoon 3 times a day. For children less than 6 months of age, there are alcohol free extracts of Echinacea that can be used. For children under 3 months of age use 5 drops 4 times a day and for children 3-6 months use 10 drops 4 times a day. Echinacea should not be used as a daily preventative.

### **For Prevention:**

At this point, I would expect the entire population to be susceptible to the swine flu. I would consider starting prevention if there is suspicious or confirmed cases in one's community. These are doses that can be taken longer-term:

- 1) Vitamin C: young children (under 5) can take 250mg twice a day and older children and adults can take 500mg twice a day
- 2) Zinc- younger children can take 5mg daily and older children and adults can take 10mg a day
- 3) Vitamin A- young children can take 2500IU daily and people over 5 can take 5000IU daily
- 4) Larix – younger children can take ¼ teaspoon of the powder once a day, and older children and adults can take ½ teaspoon or 1 tablet once a day
- 5) Elderberry – Young children can take 1 teaspoon daily, and adults and older children can take 1 capsule daily.
- 6) Vitamin D – Vitamin D, while known for its use in calcium absorption, is also very important to help fight off infections. Quite possibly, part of the reason that the “flu season” occurs in the winter is because people do not spend as much time outdoors. If possible, people should get their 25-hydroxy vitamin D level checked and get the value above 50ng/ml. If not able to check a level, all adults can take 5000IU of Vitamin D3, children under 25 lbs can take 1000IU, children 25-50 lbs can take 2000IU, and children over 50 lbs can take 3000IU. We have capsules of 1000, 2000 and 5000IU as well as a concentrated liquid that has 1000IU per single drop. If a person is suspected to have a vitamin D deficiency, either revealed in testing or from known lack of direct sun exposure (sunscreen blocks the formation of vitamin D) and supplementation, I would consider taking 5 times the dose mentioned above for 1 week in order to build up levels in the body, and then drop down to the maintenance dose. For more information about vitamin D, go to [www.vitamindcouncil.com](http://www.vitamindcouncil.com)

Please be aware that these therapies have not been evaluated in large, multi-centered studies. One must always weigh the risks and benefits of each therapy on an individualized basis. Please contact our office if there are any questions or if any issues were to arise.