**SUGGESTIONS FOR STAYING WELL AND SELF-TREATING VIRAL INFECTIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Luckily, there are many simple things we can do that can help us stay well. None of us has experience in treating Covid-19, but from treating flu and other fevers we have a good idea what to do.

**1) PREVENTION**

**Don't panic!**

It's bad for your immune system, and won't help in any way

Remember to breathe!

Drink chamomile tea

Flower essences can be really helpful. Use Rescue Remedy or Five Flower Essence if you have them, or try these excellent essences made by our friend Saskia (she also does alcohol-free essences): https://www.saskiasfloweressences.com/

**Follow the official advice of:**

Physical distancing from other people

Washing hands frequently with soap and warm water

Avoid touching your face with your hands

**How long does the virus survive on surfaces?**

Virus are alive, but can only reproduce in a host – they basically hijack your DNA to replicate themselves. They have a limited life span outside a host body. Research has shown that Covid-19 dies after a few hours if airborne, but that it can survive much longer on various surfaces. It can survive for the longest time on plastic and on stainless steel, up to 3 days. Clean these with soap and warm water.

**Ensure you are getting plenty of:**

Sleep – this is really important

Fresh air – open windows if you can't go out

Exercise

Vitamin D (sunshine, mushrooms etc)

Vitamin C (fruit and vegetables)

Zinc (pumpkin seeds, etc)

Omega 3 fatty acids (flax seed, chia seed, salmon, walnuts etc)

Garlic and onions

Fruit and vegetables

**Keep warm:**

Elevate body temperature through exercise

Avoid getting chilled

If you do get cold, warm up in a hot bath, by exercising, or go to bed with a hot water bottle or heating pad

Use a sauna, hot tub, sweat lodge or other heat source (hot bath) to raise body temperature

**Foods to avoid:**

Sugar and other highly processed foods

Wheat (increases inflammation)

Dairy products (mucus-forming)

Any known food allergens or intolerances

Heavy foods, such as red meat

**Do things that make you feel good:**

Find ways to relax, and do something creative that you enjoy. If you have access to green spaces, walk and enjoy the spring flowers. Garden. If you can't leave your house, try an online yoga class, or get creative with your cooking. Play music, dance.

Meditate.

**Herbs that help prevent infection:**

This is a time when kitchen medicine really comes into its own, as we should all have access to food, including herbs and spices.

From your pantry or the greengrocers:

Black pepper

Cardamom

Chillies

Cinnamon

Chives

Clove

Garlic

Ginger

Horseradish

Leek

Lemon

Mushrooms

Onion

Oregano and marjoram

Rosemary

Spring onions

Star anise

Thyme

In addition, there are many wild plants growing freely around us that are helpful, so if you have access to a garden or some green space where you can pick these plants, they are free medicine (and food!). This is also where edible weeds come into their own – it might be too early in the spring for many vegetables to be ready for harvest, but weeds are growing strongly now and are full of nutrients.

From your garden or the wild:

Calendula

Honeysuckle flowers

Lemon balm

Nettles

Ramsons (wild garlic)

Rose flowers

Selfheal

St John's wort

Three-cornered leek

Yarrow

Making a herb tea is the simplest way to use these plants as medicine. Of course, you could make tinctures, glycerites and oxymels if you are used to making these things. Dosage would be 1 teaspoonful two or three times a day. They can also be used if you do become ill - just increase the dosage at the first sign of feeling unwell, to about 5 times a day.

There are recipes at the end of this document for Thieves' vinegar and an immune-boosting soup you can make at home, and which are helpful in preventing infection. We will also be posting other useful recipes on our website: <http://www.hedgerowmedicine.com/recipes/list>

**2) INFECTION**

Corona viruses mostly cause colds and other mild symptoms. Covid-19 is different, and needs to be taken much more seriously. The main symptoms of Covid-19 are:

* Fever
* Dry cough
* Breathlessness

Symptoms seem to vary greatly in intensity, with many people having very mild symptoms or no symptoms and others becoming much more severe. Children seem to be mostly unaffected, while elderly people or anyone with pre-existing health problems are the most at risk of severe illness and death. Even very fit, healthy people can catch it. Obviously, if your symptoms are severe, especially breathing difficulty, you need to be in hospital. This advice is for if you are being looked after at home.

Covid-19 is primarily a disease of the lower respiratory tract but can also affect the digestive tract, liver, kidneys and heart.

The advice given here applies to any flu or even a feverish cold.

**Thoughts on fever:**

* Fever is your body's way of fighting infection, and should not be suppressed. This beneficial rise in body temperature and metabolism increases the production of antibodies and white blood cells, increases circulation and elimination, and retards the growth of bacteria and viruses.
* Normal body temperature is usually given as 98.6F (37C), but studies have shown that it is actually lower, with an average oral reading around 97.7F (36.5C). Older people tend to have lower body temperatures of around 96.8F (36F). Body temperature naturally fluctuates during the day, but usually by less than a degree.
* Influenza virus dies at around 98F to 99F (37C).
* A helpful fever is around 102F to 104F (39C to 40C). Fever should not be allowed to go much over 105F (40.5C).
* The digestive system shuts down at a temperature of around 99.5F (37.5C), which makes sense of the old adage 'to feed a cold and starve a fever'.
* Ibuprofen and other NSAIDs (such as aspirin) should **not** be taken if you have Covid-19 or other fevers. Paracetamol (Acetaminophen or brand name Tylenol) is considered safe at this time by the medical profession, but a holistic approach would avoid reducing fever by these means unless it was dangerously high.
* Fever should not become dangerously high if the patient is able to sweat. Diaphoretic (sweat-inducing) herbs such as elderflower, yarrow and ginger will encourage sweating when taken hot.
* Cool compresses can be applied to cool the body, but avoid a chill.
* Drink plenty of fluids. Hydration is vital.
* Sleep and rest in bed.
* Don't eat until the fever has dropped and you feel hungry.

**Stages of fever:**

Initially, you will feel cold. There may be shivering to increase temperature. You may look pale, and pores will be closed. A warm to hot bath or shower may be helpful at this point. Go to bed and keep warm. Stop eating. Drink plenty of hot drinks. Use stimulating diaphoretics such as chillies, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, prickly ash, garlic and onions. These can be taken as a tasty broth. Drink yarrow tea, hot.

The fever should peak at around 102F to 104F (39C to 40C) to optimize antibody production. The skin will probably feel hot and dry, and the pulse will be faster than normal. You will feel sleepy, with a lack of appetite and achy muscles. Appetite will disappear. Stay in bed in a well-ventilated room, but avoid drafts. Drink tepid or cool drinks. Mint, lemon balm, yarrow, vervain, elderflower, boneset and scullcap teas would be good choices at this stage, as teas but drunk warm or cool rather than hot.

In the next phase there may be alternating cycles of fever, sweating and chills. Continue resting and drinking plenty of fluids. Keep warm when chilled. Short, hot showers or warm baths may be helpful, but otherwise stay in bed. This phase may be followed by lots of sweating, so change the bedding as needed to avoid chills. Using towels over the sheets may be useful.

Once the fever passes, the aches and pains will go, but you will feel weak. Pulse may be fast and weak, and you may feel light-headed or dizzy. Stay in bed, and sleep as much as you feel like. Appetite will return, so eat nourishing broths and soups to replace electrolytes lost during sweating, then move on to nourishing, easily digestible foods. Juicy foods like grapes may be appealing. Small meals are best.

Continue resting for 2 to 3 weeks. Even when you feel well again, and your energy has returned, avoid excessive activity and stop and rest as soon as you get tired. Keep warm, drink plenty of fluids, get plenty of sleep and eat healthily. This recuperation period is really important.

**Herbs for coughs:**

Covid-19 is associated with a dry cough, so soothing, moistening (demulcent) herbs (and honey) will be useful, such as:

* Marshmallow, hollyhock and okra
* Slippery elm
* Liquorice
* Mullein flowers

**Four Thieves' Vinegar:**

This is an excellent recipe for keeping winter colds and other infections at bay. The original story goes back to 18th-century France, where four grave robbers were caught robbing the houses of plague victims. In return for their freedom, they gave the recipe of how they stayed free of infection. The recipe made it into the official pharmacopoeia, and is still sold today as Le vinaigre des quatre voleurs.

In North America, this is made with hot spices and is better known as Fire Cider.

The essential ingredients are **vinegar** and **garlic**, and then you can add your choice of other aromatic herbs and spices:

**rosemary**, **sage**, **oregano**, **mint**, **thyme**, **lavender**, **cinnamon**, **lemon**, **ginger**, **star anise**, **black pepper**, **mustard seed**, **cloves** etc. We usually add an **onion**, and **horseradish** or **hot chillies**.

It is worth making quite a big batch. Fill a jar with layers of garlic and whatever other herbs and spices you have on hand. Top up with cider vinegar, or whatever vinegar you want to use, to cover the herbs and spices.

The normal method is to seal the jar and put in a warm place for two or three weeks or longer, then strain and bottle for use. But for current usage, use the **quick method, which will take a couple of hours**:

* put your jar of vinegar and herbs in a pot of hot water, with the lid loose to let air out, and keep gently heated (don't boil this water bath, but a gentle simmer is OK) for an hour or so. Let the jar sit in the pan of water until it cools. Leave the herbs in the jar, and just pour off a little of the vinegar as you need it. The bottle can be topped up with more vinegar. You can add honey or vegetable glycerine to taste.

Your thieves’ vinegar can be used several ways:

• take a teaspoonful several times a day, neat or in a little hot water

• add to salad dressings

• use a tablespoon in the bath

• use topically as an antiseptic on the skin

• use as a topical spray for disinfecting kitchen surfaces.

**Self-Defence Soup:**

This is another adaptable recipe, where you can choose ingredients depending on what is available, what you like and what suits your constitution. It is an immune-boosting mixture, and the broth can be taken during a fever.

Gently fry **chopped onions** and **garlic** in a little oil. Add some sliced **mushrooms**.

Add grated **fresh ginger**, some chopped **chillies**, some dried or fresh **turmeric**, **sage** or **thyme**, and **black pepper**.

Add **vegetable stock** (this can be made from celery, carrot and onion, or any vegetable peelings you like, or you can use a powdered stock).

Add some **star anise** or **cinnamon**.

Cover and cook over low to medium heat for about 20 minutes. Add some chopped **chives**, **green garlic** or **spring onions (scallions)** just before serving.

**References:**

This article has been compiled from my knowledge and experience, with information from the following sources included:

* <https://www.naimh.com/coronavirus?fbclid=IwAR3Idry0M5bgQMFeWJF2ac9LLOPDcUMEBtB-yaTMjjnGvxZS2Bg24ZAfZbA>
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