

Herbal Therapies And Vitamins Offer A Practical Approach To Battling Cold And Flu Season

(NAPSA)—With cold and flu season upon us, millions of Americans are arming themselves with some of nature's tried-and-true remedies: herbs, vitamins and minerals.

"Herbal remedies and vitamins can make a dramatic difference in getting you through the cold season," said Hyla Cass, M.D., a leading authority on supplements who is on the faculty at UCLA. "Like over-the-counter cold medicines, they address symptoms. But vitamins and herbs also help build up the immune system to fight off infections and prevent recurrences, and they don't cause drowsiness the way antihistamines and decongestants sometimes do. The key is to get plenty of rest, drink lots of water and start taking supplements at the first sign of cold symptoms."

The Dietary Supplement Information Bureau recommends these herbs and vitamins:

- **Astragalus**—Valued for centuries by the Chinese for its ability to enhance the immune system and its stress-fighting properties, astragalus is used to improve resistance to colds and to decrease their duration.

- **Echinacea**—First used in America by the Sioux, echinacea has been found in American medicine cabinets since the late 1800s. One of the most popular herbs in the world today, echinacea enhances the body's natural defenses as an immune system stimulant, helping fend off colds, flu and other infections.

- **Elder** (also known as elderberry)—The flowers and berries,

A non-commercial Web site, www.supplementinfo.org, provides accurate scientifically-based information about vitamins, minerals, herbs and supplements.



from which the standardized extract is made, have been used as a food and medicinal agent for thousands of years. (The plant itself is not eaten because the roots, stems, leaves and unripe fruit are toxic.) Traditionally, elder is used to treat and prevent colds, flu and sinusitis. It promotes anti-viral activity by increasing bronchial secretions. Studies have shown the flowers have anti-inflammatory properties.

- **Eleuthero** (formerly known as Siberian Ginseng)—Used to treat colds and flu for 2,000 years in Chinese medicine, eleuthero boosts non-specific body resistance to a wide range of stressors. The standardized extract, made from the root of the plant (a member of the ginseng family) is reported to increase stamina and endurance and protect the body against stress-induced illness.

- **Goldenseal**—One of the best-known herbs in the U.S. today, goldenseal root was used by Native Americans and was very popular as a medicinal remedy from the 1850s to the 1940s. An anti-infective, it has also been used to relieve congestion and as a digestive tonic. It is not recommended for inflammatory conditions.

- **Vitamin C**—It supports healthy immune system response to viral and bacterial infections, and its antihistamine activity reduces some inflammatory reaction. Studies suggest vitamin C lessens the severity and duration of colds, and research indicates moderate to high doses lead to fewer colds.

- **Zinc**—Essential for the functioning of over 300 body enzymes, zinc regulates a wide variety of immune system functions. It is also believed to have anti-inflammatory properties and stimulate anti-viral activity. Studies have shown zinc gluconate lozenges can reduce the duration and severity of cold and flu symptoms.

For more information, visit www.supplementinfo.org, which provides accurate scientific information about vitamins, minerals, herbs and supplements. The Web site, which sells no product, covers health conditions, recommended dosages and information on interactions. Dietary supplements are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. In addition, this Web site is supervised by the Dietary Supplement Information Bureau's Scientific Advisory Board, thirteen of the nation's leading experts from the fields of medicine, science and research.

"All Americans—including children—should take multivitamins every day for optimal nutrition and health," said Dr. Cass. "But when cold or flu symptoms appear, these vitamins and herbs can make a powerful difference in helping you feel better and stay healthier."