

## Wake Forest Baptist Health [Center for Integrative Medicine](#)

### Boosting Immunity and Preventing Infections, Naturally

#### [Dr. Kathi Kemper's](#) Tips

1. Get immunized. This boosts immunity to the organisms in the vaccine.
2. Wash your hands!
3. Cover your sneezes with your arm, elbow, or handkerchief. Avoid shaking hands with someone who has sneezed into his hand.
4. As much as possible, avoid germs. In the hospital, we use gowns, gloves, and wash our hands frequently. If you are caring for a sick family member or friend, wash your hands often.
5. Sleep at least 8-9 hours per day. Healthy sleep promotes healthy immunity.
6. Build and maintain friendships and social ties; people with more social support are more resistant to cold and flu germs.
7. Stay upbeat. Learn to manage stress skillfully. Upbeat people are more resistant to cold and flu germs. So are people who meditate regularly. Effective stress management practices include music, prayer (CareNet 336-716-7339). Consider:
  - ◆ Guided imagery (Jeff Feldman 336-716-8400 or CDs from [Health Journeys](#))
  - ◆ Biofeedback from [HeartMath](#) (either portable EmWave PSR or PC-based) or [Relaxing Rhythms/WildDivine](#) (PC only).
  - ◆ Meditation class (Ann McCarty, PA-C (336) 722-7266 or [UCLA's Mindful Awareness Research Center](#)'s online resources).
8. Maintain healthy vitamin D levels. In the winter, consider vitamin D supplements. 8 ounces of milk contain 400 IU of vitamin D. Many experts recommend 1000 - 1200 IU daily for adults to optimize immune function. Do not exceed 10,000 IU daily without medical advice and supervision.
9. Diet: Junk food is a drain on the entire system. Eat plenty of locally grown fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and seeds.
10. If you are prone to sinus infections, use a neti pot to wash pollen and germs out of your nose.
11. Dry heat. Regular sauna users have fewer colds than non-users.
12. [Supplements](#). Consider with your doctor. (See CIM website [Dietary Supplements](#) for brand information.)
  - ◆ Omega-3 fatty acids: 1000 – 2000 mg daily of EPA+DHA to decrease inflammation; it takes about 3-6 weeks for this to build up in your system. It is not an instant fix.
  - ◆ Vitamin C: Regular use of 200 mg or more daily can help reduce the risk of colds in those with high stress (marathon runners, skiers, soldiers) and in children. Excess causes diarrhea; do not take more than 4000 mg daily without medical supervision.
  - ◆ Local honey: ¼ - ½ tsp daily; low exposure to local pollens may help build up IgG and reduce IgE.
  - ◆ Probiotics to help normalize healthy bacteria in gut that help regulate immunity. More than a dozen randomized trials in adults and several in children in day care centers show benefits of *Bifidobacteria* sp and *Lactobacillus* sp. See our handouts and read labels carefully.
  - ◆ Other Considerations:
    - Garlic. Regular intake of raw garlic or supplements rich in allicin can help reduce the number of days with colds.
    - North American ginseng (COLD-FX): 2 capsules daily in winter can help ward off colds/flu.
    - Echinacea is not better than placebo for preventing colds in adults, but preliminary studies show it may help prevent colds in children.