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[Total Health Program](#)

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Six Ways to Avoid the Winter Flu--and a Flu Shot Isn't One of Them

**By Dr. Joseph Mercola
with Rachael Droege**

Do you come down with a case of the flu like clockwork every year as soon as the leaves start to change color or the snow starts to fall? Do you feel helpless against the flu? If you said yes, and if you feel that avoiding the flu is beyond your ability, then read on. These are surefire ways to greatly reduce your chances of getting the flu this year.

Avoid Sugar

Sugar decreases the function of your immune system almost immediately, and as you likely know, a strong immune system is key to fighting off viruses and other illness, including the flu. It is especially imperative to avoid sugar if you feel you are coming down with something, but keeping sugar out of your diet for the long haul will do wonders for your health and make your body stronger, which will make it harder for the flu to bother you.

Be aware that sugar is present in foods you may not suspect like ketchup and fruit juice. For all the steps to building your immune system to its peak levels, which is by far the most effective way to avoid the flu (and chronic disease), consider my new book, "[Dr. Mercola's TOTAL HEALTH Cookbook & Plan](#)", which presents my entire dietary and health program that took twenty years to develop and has helped tens of thousands of patients at [my clinic](#) overcome illness and disease.

Get Enough Rest

Just like it becomes harder for you to get your daily tasks done if you're tired, if your body is overly fatigued it will be harder for it to fight the flu. Regular rest will keep you strong and ensure that your body has the strength to fight off any potential invaders. Be sure to check out my recent article on [sleep and cancer prevention](#) for some great tips to help you get quality rest.

Eat Garlic Regularly

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Garlic is a triple-whammy: it's antibacterial, antiviral and anti-fungal. Garlic is one food that you should be eating every day.

It is important to note that the garlic must be fresh to give you optimal health benefits. The active ingredient is destroyed within one hour of smashing the garlic, so garlic pills are virtually worthless and should not be used. When you use the garlic, compress it with a spoon prior to swallowing it, or put it through your juicer to add to your [vegetable juice](#). If you swallow the clove intact you will not convert the active ingredient, allicin, to its active form.

One problem with garlic, of course, is the smell, but generally a few cloves a day are tolerated by most people. If you develop a socially offensive odor then all you need to do is slightly decrease the amount of garlic you're consuming until there is no odor present. Garlic is an herb, however, so if you do not like it or it makes you feel sick, this is your body's way of telling you that you should avoid it.

Don't Let Stress Become Overwhelming

We all face some stress everyday, but if stress becomes overwhelming then your body will be less able to fight off the flu and other illness. It has been estimated that up to 90 percent of illness and disease is stress-related. If you feel that stress is taking a toll on your health, consider using [Emotional Freedom Technique \(EFT\)](#), a type of psychological acupressure. EFT is remarkably effective in relieving stress associated with all kinds of events, from work to family to trauma. You can check out my free, [25-page EFT manual](#) for some guidelines on how to perform EFT. Beyond that you can try my [EFT Series on DVD or VHS](#), which provides in-depth instruction on EFT.

Exercise

When you exercise you increase your circulation and your blood flow throughout your body. The components of your immune system are also better circulated, which means your immune system has a better chance of finding an illness before it has a chance to spread. In a sense, exercising helps your immune system to be more efficient in weeding out and acting upon viruses and diseases. You can review my [exercise guidelines](#) for some great tips to get started.

Wash Your Hands

Washing your hands will decrease your likelihood of spreading a virus to your nose, mouth or other people. If your immune system is strong, it should be able to fight off the virus if it does enter your body, but washing your hands provides a bit of extra protection.

Be sure you don't use antibacterial soap for this--antibacterial soaps

are completely unnecessary, and they cause far more harm than good. You can read my recent article on [hygiene mistakes](#) for more information.

Instead of antibacterial soap, identify a simple chemical-free soap that you can switch your family to. Local health food stores typically carry a variety of natural soaps.

You may have noticed that I didn't mention getting a flu shot. This is because the flu shot, and the newly released [FluMist nasal vaccine](#), are not the answer to avoiding the flu.

The "experts" will use fear to motivate people to get a flu vaccine, but this is yet another health care illusion. Let's be clear, flu can definitely be a killer disease and is not something that should be easily dismissed. But, remember that flu shots don't prevent illness--never have, never will.

The flu vaccine can actually weaken the immune system and make you more predisposed to the illness. And the side effects of FluMist, cough, runny nose/nasal congestion, irritability, headaches, chills, muscle aches and fever, sound just like the symptoms of the flu. If you decide to get the nasal flu vaccine, you will get not only a live flu virus in each dose but also table sugar and [MSG](#), which are fraught with their own problems.

Plus, research has shown an increased risk of Bell palsy following intranasal flu vaccination, according to the [Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety \(GACVS\)](#). The makers of the nasal flu vaccine in the study decided not to market it the following season due to the risk. According to GACVS, the greater risk of Bell palsy following immunization with this vaccine may have been due to specific vaccine components, or simply to use of the intranasal administration route. It is therefore possible that such complications of vaccine administration may also apply to other nasal vaccines.

The [flu vaccine, whether in the shot or nasal form, is worthless](#) at best and should be avoided. Not only are they loaded with toxic chemicals including [mercury](#) and aluminum, but many people come down with the flu shortly after receiving the shot. This is because it actually weakens the immune system, making the person more predisposed to the illness. I have never received a flu shot and haven't missed a day of work due to illness in over 20 years.

The bottom line is to lead a healthy lifestyle, which includes [eating right](#), exercising, getting adequate sleep, and addressing stressors, year round. Again, consider reading [my new book](#) and implementing my diet and health program into your life (the book is guaranteed for life or your money back!) If you do, chances are you'll never have to

worry about coming down with the flu.

Related Articles:

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[Five Simple Strategies to Reduce Stress and Eliminate Exhaustion](#)

[Risks of FluMist Vaccine](#)

[Why I Never Get Flu Shots](#)

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