

Natural Treatments for Colds and Flu

KEY WORDS

Influenza, pelargonium, andrographis, colds, viruses, bacteria, pneumonia, bronchitis, coughs, sneezes, runny nose, sinus infections, secondary infections, flu, anti-inflammatory, immune system, H1N1, swine flu

Did you know that over 200 viruses are known to cause what we call "The Common Cold"? They can survive on doorknobs, telephones, computers, tabletops, and even your skin for 3 hours. Experts report that children can have between 6 and 12 colds a year. Adults average 2 to 4 colds per year, with women having greater numbers of colds than men, perhaps because of increased contact with children.

While a cold may not be very dangerous on its own, it can lead to something that *can* be life-threatening: bacterial infections like pneumonia and bronchitis. When you are infected with a cold virus, it can cause more fluid than usual to accumulate in our sinuses and lungs – hence the runny noses, sneezes, and coughs. These warm, dark, wet places are a perfect breeding ground for bacteria that cause lung and sinus infections. Also, since the immune system is busy battling the cold virus, it may run out of steam when the bacterial invaders come along. These bacterial invasions are called "secondary infections" because they follow in the wake of the common cold.

And with everything you may have heard in the news, I probably don't have to tell you that flu (influenza) viruses can be anywhere from mild to life-threatening. Their survival outside the body is better than cold viruses. Some strains can live for 24 hours on hard surfaces and up to 12 hours on soft. That makes these viruses much more likely to hitchhike on a passerby.

So it is extremely important to focus on prevention, especially during cold and flu season. And anything that can shorten the duration (how long it lasts) and severity (seriousness of symptoms) can be tremendously important, since there are no medical cures for either the common cold or influenza.

Since symptoms vary greatly and are of different levels of concern based on your health history, I would highly recommend that you consult your physician as to the best way to treat any illness at the onset. Personally, I prefer not to subject myself to a flu shot or take medication that can also cause side effects. I want my body and immune system to adjust to the virus and, in turn, become stronger for the next onslaught of the cold and flu season. I have a concern that reliance on flu shots and medications are keeping our immune systems from the natural strengthening that occurs with exposure. I wonder if this missed opportunity to strengthen our immune response leaves us ill-prepared to react to *other* viruses and bacteria.

Terry recommends a formula with these ingredients.

Proprietary Formula	280 mg
Andrographis (<i>Andrographis paniculata</i>) Leaf Extract clinically studied and standardized to contain > 30% andrographolides, Pelargonium (<i>Pelargonium sidoides radix</i>) Root Extract standardized for > 0.3% umckalin	

According to market researchers, the majority of people with common colds are self medicating. Conventional therapies for cold and flu focus primarily on *temporary* symptom relief, and include over-the-counter fever reducers, anti-inflammatory drugs, and decongestants.

However, should I become ill, I have discovered two herbal ingredients that I would *highly*

To your good health,
Terry... Naturally



recommend to enhance the body's ability to fight off the cold and flu. The first herb is the root of ***Pelargonium sidoides (Umckaloabo)***. This herb traditionally was used by the South African Zulus for hundreds of years to treat coughs, colds, upper respiratory tract irritations, tuberculosis and gastrointestinal complaints. It is still a natural medicine prescribed by traditional healers in South Africa.

According to the book *Tradition, Culture and Development in Africa* by Ambe J. Njoh, an Englishman, Charles Stevens, with tuberculosis traveled to South Africa in 1897 in search of treatment. He encountered a doctor of traditional African medicine who prepared for him a decoction of *Pelargonium sidoides*. He recovered completely, and subsequently brought the plant home with him to England, where he created a medicine called "Steven's Consumption Cure," which became very popular. In the early 1920s, a Swiss medical doctor, Dr. Adrien Sechehaye, became interested in this Pelargonium decoction and brought it to

More...

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Switzerland, where he successfully treated over 800 patients with tuberculosis, between 1920 and 1929. In 1929, he published a collection of these medical case studies.

With the advent of synthetic drugs in the 1930s, interest in botanical medicines began to decline, and *Pelargonium* languished for fifty years until it was revived by renewed European interest in beneficial herbal remedies.

In Germany, *Pelargonium* has been prescribed over-the-counter since 1983 and German doctors have observed widespread effectiveness against infections of the sinus, throat and respiratory tract. Double-blind, placebo-controlled studies on patients with acute bronchitis confirmed that extracts of *Pelargonium sidoides* are effective in treating this ailment. Encouraging results have been achieved in children as young as six years of age, especially those who have not responded well to repeated treatments with antibiotics.

In a recent double-blind, placebo controlled study, 103 people with the common cold were given either *Pelargonium sidoides* or a placebo. After 5 days, the reduction of symptoms was almost *double* in the pelargonium group. After 10 days, 78.8% of the pelargonium group was completely cured, vs. only 31.4% of the placebo group. [Lizogub VG, Riley DS, Heger M. Efficacy of a *Pelargonium sidoides* preparation in patients with the common cold: a randomized, double blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial. *Explore* (NY). 2007 Nov-Dec;3(6):573-84.]

Pelargonium sidoides is considered antibacterial, antiviral, and an expectorant. This triple action attacks the acute infection at its root, no pun intended, and strengthens the immune system, helping to prevent re-infection. Due to its bacteria-killing and immune modulating characteristics, *Pelargonium* is a good choice

when treating the cold, flu, and other respiratory illnesses.

The numbers speak for themselves. Americans suffer over **500 million** colds every year, which is estimated to cost \$40 billion dollars annually. Medical treatment is 45% of this cost and 55% is due to indirect costs, such as missed work days. Another \$3 billion dollars is spent *every year* on OTC medications that do little good and in some cases, *much* harm.

In Germany, where botanical medicine is mainstream, *Pelargonium* was the *number two* preparation sold for cold and flu in 2007, amongst *all* OTC pharmacy drugs. It has been clinically studied and proven to reduce the severity and shorten the duration of colds and flu. In all the studies thus far conducted, there has been no toxicity or significant side effects observed. *Pelargonium* root can have a huge impact on keeping you healthy and keeping your immune system strong.

My second herbal preparation is a clinically proven, standardized extract derived from the plant ***Andrographis paniculata***, commonly known as the "King of the bitters," and widely used in Ayurvedic medicine. I take this along with *Pelargonium* as my personal formula for health. My experience has been that these two herbs together are much better than either one alone.

Strong clinical evidence supports the beneficial effects of *andrographis* in the management of the common cold, both for prevention and reducing the intensity of symptoms, particularly sore throat and nasal secretions.



Andrographis paniculata

Two systematic reviews of available clinical studies have further highlighted these conclusions. *Andrographis* has been shown to possess immune-stimulant and anti-inflammatory activities in scientific studies.

In one double-blind, placebo-controlled trial, a very special *andrographis* standardized extract was administered to 223 adults with uncomplicated upper respiratory tract infections (URTI). There was a significant decrease in the symptoms of URTI compared to the placebo group. None of the studies indicate any serious adverse side effects. In addition, *andrographis* has a long traditional-use history, with no safety issues reported.

If I were to come down with a cold or flu, the combination of *Pelargonium* root and *andrographis* would be my choice to relieve symptoms and help me recover much faster. It is my favorite combination to boost my immune system and help assure a healthy upper respiratory tract. This combination can be used when you start to become ill, or it can be used long term, especially during cold and flu season, to give your body the extra immune strengthening it needs. You can even use it every day to fortify your immune system. **TN**