

- Cold (Disease) / Vitamins / Stress / Sleep / Exercise

Win the cold war

FROM A BALANCED DIET TO EXERCISE, THERE ARE WAYS TO HELP YOU SHAKE

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THERE'S nothing more annoying than the common cold – especially one that won't go away. With all the masking up and staying home, many of us haven't had a proper cold for a while – making it feel even worse when you do catch one.



“After spending most of the last two years in lockdown, it’s no surprise many of us are finding we’re now more susceptible to viral infections, such as the common cold,” says Melanie King, pharmacist at Pharmacy2u (pharmacy2u.co.uk).

There’s no cure for the common cold, but there are a few things you can do to potentially help yourself feel better sooner...

MAKE SURE YOU EAT WELL

“You might have heard the phrase ‘feed a cold, starve a fever,’ but this is an old wives’ tale – you should feed both!” says Melanie. “Although you may not feel up to it, eating nutritious, balanced meals will give you the energy to fight off an infection. “It’s also important to drink plenty of fluids to replace those lost from sweating, and to make it easier for the body to get rid of mucus by keeping it runny.”

Immunologist and clinical researcher at A-IR (a-ircr.com), Dr Ross Walton, agrees on the importance of a healthy, balanced diet. He recommends foods containing vitamins C, D and zinc: “Nutrients all shown to support your immune health,” he says.

TAKE YOUR VITAMINS

“Vitamin D is an essential nutrient that can help keep bones and muscles healthy to support general health,” explains Melanie. “Our bodies normally make it when we’re exposed to sunlight, however, in the winter months when we’re indoors more, it may be worth considering other sources. While it won’t stop you from getting a cold, getting enough vitamin D can help your body fight off any infections more effectively.”

Dr Sarah Brewer, GP and Healthspan (healthspan.co.uk) medical director suggests also taking vitamin C supplements, as this might “hasten healing”.

GET PLENTY OF SLEEP

“Good sleep enables your body to rest, repair and restore health,” notes Dr Walton. “Try to achieve a minimum of seven to eight hours a night.”

LOWER YOUR STRESS

“Since stress can reduce the effectiveness of your immune system to aid your recovery, try to identify areas of your life that are causing you stress, and take time to relax,” suggests Dr Walton.

DO MODERATE EXERCISE

While working out might be the last thing you want to do when you have a cold, Dr Walton points out: “Moderate exercise, just a 20 to 30-minute walk a day, will improve your wellbeing and support your immune system.”

GET MEDICATION ADVICE

“Your pharmacist can recommend several non-prescription medications that can help alleviate your cold, such as decongestants, which can help with a blocked or runny nose,” says Melanie.

“You should avoid combining multiple products with ingredients like paracetamol, and if you’re unsure, it’s always best to ask your GP or pharmacist for advice.”

THOSE SYMPTOMS, SAYS SAM WYLIE-HARRIS

TRY PELARGONIUM EXTRACT

“This is the most effective natural treatment for a common cold I’ve come across, and always keep some at hand,” says Dr Brewer. “Pelargonium has antiviral and antibacterial actions, and stimulates the clearance of infected mucus.”

If you’re struggling with your symptoms, feel something isn’t right or your cold lasts longer than 14 days, Melanie says this may be a sign of secondary bacterial infection, and the best thing to do is contact your pharmacist or GP.