

Ask our
experts



COLD COMFORT

We invite our readers to ask a natural therapist their burning questions. **Gemma Hurditch** is our expert for this issue, for the College of Naturopathic Medicine

Q Please can you share your top tips for a toddler who is prone to colds and thick catarrh at this time of year?

A Probiotics have been clinically proven to reduce the incidence of respiratory disease. High quality probiotics are a must - they should contain billions of colony forming units (CFU) and identify the genus, species, and strain. I particularly like *Lactobacillus Rhamnosus* GG. You may also like to get a multi-strain probiotic which can have a variety of health promoting effects such as supporting healthy digestion and relieving constipation in children, which will also strengthen their immune system and can reduce the frequency of colds and other illnesses. Powder form is easiest to administer to children. Reducing sugar intake can also support immunity. Snack-time is often where the sugar laden foods come in,

so cut out biscuits, processed fruit bars and cakes and focus on savoury instead. Red peppers have excellent levels of immune-boosting vitamin C and cut into crudités are a great snack. Add hummus or mashed avocado for dipping. Brazil nuts are rich in selenium and whilst not for everyday, Brazil nut butter on oat cakes or a dollop added to a slice of apple every few days is another cold and flu preventative. Aim for organic if you can.

Q What is the best way to ensure a healthy milk supply in the colder months. I tend to get run down at this time of year and feel more tired, especially when breastfeeding (which I've been doing for the last four years, now with a newborn!)

A Even if our diet is poor, breastfeeding mothers will utilise all maternal stores to make a nutritious milk,

which of course may then lead to stress if there is not enough 'left in the bank' to support our own healthy functioning! Firstly get your iron levels and thyroid checked. Eat well, sleep as well as you can and manage stress. With young children you are no doubt very busy, but it would be great to find at least 20 minutes each day to help yourself unwind and recharge. Gentle stretching and breathing exercises, an Epsom salt bath or even a foot massage from your partner can bring back some balance. Just knowing you have your daily break can be restoring in itself! Aim to eat organic food wherever possible to increase immune-supportive phytonutrient intake and reduce toxic load, which unfortunately makes its way into breast milk. Investigating the 'Dirty Dozen' and 'Clean 15' lists of fruit and veg can help you manage your budget

for organic. Soups and stews can be a great way to increase your hydration and nutrition whilst minimising loss of nutrients through cooking.

Q Help me choose the best diet to avoid acid reflux in the middle months of pregnancy. I had it during my last pregnancy and it almost finished me off. I want to avoid it this time if at all possible.

A Acid reflux is a very common problem in pregnancy due to physical changes, as well as hormonal changes which relax the ring of muscles which keep your food and stomach acid from coming back up. A number of the herbs that we would normally recommend for acid reflux such as slippery elm and aloe vera are not advised in pregnancy. Most women find relief from keeping to a mild palate, no hot/spicy foods, reduced fats or fried foods, nothing rich or creamy. Take smaller portions more frequently. Cut food into small bites and chew well; the less work your stomach has to do the better. Taking a couple of teaspoons of good quality organic apple cider vinegar in a small glass of water during and after meals can help. Chewing grated red apple is another home remedy. Don't lie down straight after eating, and try to leave 3 hours between dinner and bedtime. Avoid drinking cow's milk or peppermint tea which can frequently make symptoms worse. If you are eating less it is even more important to go for quality so choose organic and unprocessed food wherever possible.

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