

## **Alternative Treatments for Bronchitis and Lower Respiratory Infections**

Winter is just around the corner. That means rain, cold weather and cold symptoms. For some people, a cold is just a cold, but for others it spells trouble and nasty respiratory problems –like bronchitis.

Bronchitis is an inflammatory condition that often begins with a dry cough and leads to a buildup of mucous. Caused by the irritation and infection of the bronchi, the passage from the trachea to the lungs, it often follows a cold or upper respiratory infection and can be aggravated by dust.

Some people are more susceptible to bronchitis: individuals with a lowered immune system, who are on numerous medications and dealing with chronic viral infections, including HIV infection; cigarette smokers; individuals who consume excess alcohol, and those in an environment of second hand smoke and/or chemical pollutants.

Symptoms of bronchitis include shortness of breath, a dry shallow cough or a painful deep productive cough, chest tightness, increased mucous, wheezing and fever. Long term bronchitis can increase the probability of developing emphysema in later life.

There are many ways to treat bronchitis naturally. A natural approach to treating bronchitis involves enhancing the bodies' natural ability to fight infection, while stimulating the removal of mucous from the body.

At the onset of a cold or other infection, immediately increase your intake of Vitamin C blended with bioflavonoids, or take them daily as part of an immune enhancement program. Vitamin C contains anti viral and anti bacterial properties, and helps with the proper functioning of the immune system by enhancing the white blood cells' ability to fight infection. Vitamin C also increases levels of interferon -a chemical in the body, which fights viral infections- and strengthens the mucous membranes lining the respiratory tract. Choose a non chewable vitamin C because they are unsweetened. If you experience loose bowel movements, it means that your body has reached its limit of absorption of Vitamin C and you could cut back on the amount of Vitamin C you are using.

### **Lifestyle changes can help too...**

There are also lifestyle changes you can make to treat bronchitis. Avoid smoking and contact with second hand smoke. Cigarette smoke is an irritant to the lungs, and the body automatically produces excess mucous in an attempt to protect the sensitive mucous membranes from chronic irritation and prevent further inflammation.

Incorporate regular moderate exercise into your daily routine. Fresh air is important; try to avoid air conditioned buildings and recycled air and as much as possible.

Deep breathing also helps. On that train of thought, blowing balloons is a useful practice to help strengthen the lungs and ease breathlessness.

### **Watch what you eat!**

Nutrition also plays a role in bronchial health. A diet low in fiber (lacking fruit and vegetables) and high in red meat and processed and prepackaged foods and are linked to lung weakness. Instead, choose foods that have a healing effect on the lungs like watercress, seaweeds, daikon radish and other radishes, cabbage and ginger.

There are many other foods that can help bronchitis. For example, add fresh garlic, onion and leeks into your diet. They contain volatile oils which are antiseptic in nature and disinfect the membranes lining the lungs and respiratory tract as they are excreted from the body.

Avoid sweets, sugar and fruit juice (including orange juice), sucrose and honey. Sugar competes with Vitamin C for absorption into the white blood cells, affecting the motility of white blood cells and inhibiting immune system function. The higher your intake of sugar, the greater the impact on the immune system. A high intake of sugar reduces the white blood cells ability to engulf and destroy foreign agents. It's thought that a high intake of sugar and increased insulin levels compete with Vitamin C for membrane transport sites on the white blood cells. Vitamin C and sugar have opposing effects on white blood cell function, as both require insulin for membrane transport into the tissues.

Avoid excess alcohol. A high alcohol intake increases your susceptibility to infection; just like sugar, the higher your intake of alcohol, the greater the impairment of white blood cell mobility. Individuals who consume alcohol daily are also known to have a higher incidence of pneumonia.

Eliminate dairy products! Cheese, milk and other dairy products are highly mucous forming, creating more mucous in a body and further contribute to the problem we are trying to address.

Increase the intake of fluids in the form of home made soup (staying away from cream based soups and instead choosing a broth, tomato or bouillon based flavoring- ensure msg free!), water and herbal teas. Avoid juice and pop.

### **Anti Mucous Tea**

Lemon -1 fresh

Cayenne pepper powder – a pinch

Elderflower - 2 tablespoons

Cinnamon -1 teaspoon

Grated Ginger -2 tablespoon

Green onion -6 chopped

Add into 2 cups of water, bring to a boil then reduce the heat to a simmer, covered for 10 minutes. Drink frequently throughout the day.

### **Topical Applications**

Placing a heating pad or hot water bottle on the chest at bedtime can go a long way to reduce lung inflammation and help manage bronchial congestion and infection; or better yet, try a traditional home remedy for removing chest congestion.

### **Soothing relief from a mustard poultice or a steam**

Placing a heating pad or hot water bottle on your chest at bedtime can go a long way to reduce lung inflammation and help manage bronchial congestion and infection. Better yet, try a mustard poultice, a traditional home remedy for removing chest congestion. It's excellent for bronchitis and pneumonia.

Preparation is simple:

- Mix 1 part dry mustard powder with 3 parts flour, adding just enough water to form a paste.
- Apply the paste onto a thin cotton tea cloth, tea towel or cheesecloth.
- Apply a thin layer of cream onto the chest to protect the skin from blistering and apply the pack on to the chest. Do not leave the poultice on for too long or the skin may blister.

You could also try steaming. Steaming with essential oils is an excellent application for cold and flus, an antiseptic for the lower respiratory passages, and it reduces congestion from the sinuses. Essential oils are antiseptic in nature and contain anti viral, antibacterial and expectorant properties to assist in the removal of mucous from the lungs. Some essential oils for steaming include:

- Eucalyptus Essential Oil: *Eucalyptus globulus*: is a great decongestant oil for steaming and adding into a sauna or bath.

- Basil Essential Oil: *Ocimum basilicum*: is useful as an antispasmodic and for chest infections.
- Thyme Essential Oil: *Thymus vulgaris*: strengthens your body's resistance to infection, and is useful for respiratory infections.

Mother Nature supplies plant remedies with expectorant properties that help liquefy sticky mucous and remove it from the body; antispasmodic herbs for a raspy spastic cough, and soothing herbs for raw inflamed mucous membranes which can be taken in tea, tincture or capsule form.

Elecampane Root: *Inula helenium*: An herb with antibacterial and expectorant properties used for a chronic coughs and help to remove catarrh from sinuses.

Fenugreek Seeds: *Trigonella foenicum grecon*

An herb containing soothing mucilage properties, producing a protective coating over irritated mucous membranes. It's soothing for a dry cough and bronchitis.

Thyme Herb: *Thymus vulgaris*: An antiseptic anti viral with antispasmodic properties, it's excellent for a dry cough, sore throat and bronchi infection. You can also prepare thyme tea as a gargle for a sore throat or drink it as a tea for deeper respiratory complaints.

Wild Cherry Bark: *Prunus serotina*: An antispasmodic herb used traditionally for a deep raspy cough, whooping cough and asthma.

Lobelia Herb: *Lobelia inflata*: THE respiratory antispasmodic herb; a relaxant that helps to dilate the bronchial passages, allowing more air into the lungs. This herb also helps with difficult, restricted breathing.

As mucous is loosened from the lungs, do not swallow the loosened mucous, instead bring it up and out of the body.

Focusing on a healthy lifestyle and optimal nutrition will help to ensure you have healthy lungs. During times of lowered immunity and times of increased susceptibility to infection, incorporating some additional support from Mother Nature can offer numerous options to help keep the body functioning at optimal levels.

Katolen Yardley, MNIMH is a medical herbalist

<http://www.katolenyardley.com>

in private practice at [Alchemy & Elixir Health Group](#) in Vancouver and Coquitlam.

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