

CLINICAL GUIDE FOR WINTER SUPPORT

12 Liquid Herbal Extracts for Seasonal Immune and Respiratory Health

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As daylight hours shorten, the cool, crisp mornings, cosy jumpers and hearty soups are welcome comforts. But winter's seasonal shift also brings its own set of challenges, particularly for respiratory health. Colder temperatures, dry air and increased indoor living create ideal conditions for infections ranging from the common cold and influenza to bronchitis and asthma flare-ups. During these months, the immune system is often under pressure, making it essential to support respiratory function and overall wellbeing with targeted, holistic interventions.ⁱ

Liquid herbal extracts offer an effective means of addressing these seasonal pressures. Their high bioavailability ensures rapid absorption of active phytochemicals which can help soothe inflamed airways, support mucous clearance and modulate the immune response against respiratory pathogens. These extracts give clinicians a versatile tool for both prophylactic support and acute care, helping patients breathe easier and recover faster

throughout the colder months.ⁱⁱ

Herbalists often say, "the best herbs for colds and flu are the ones that help you prevent them." While prevention through nutrition, lifestyle and strategic herbal prescribing is ideal, illness can still find its way in, especially when the body is run-down or recovering from prolonged stress. A mild cold or flu once or twice a year is actually a healthy sign of immune function in action, creating antibodies that support future resistance. But when patients present with recurrent infections or poor recovery, it may be time to consider adaptogens like reishi, astragalus and Siberian ginseng, herbs that gently modulate immune activity and strengthen resilience without overstimulation.ⁱⁱⁱ

At the first signs of illness (fever, sneezing, blocked or runny nose, cough, sore throat, fatigue, a sense of something 'brewing') echinacea, elderberry and andrographis are often go-to remedies. These herbs are immune stimulating and antiviral, ideal in the

early and peak phases of infection. When symptoms progress into sinus congestion and head colds, elder flower and eyebright can provide symptomatic relief, clearing nasal passages and easing pressure. And for deep, chesty coughs or dry, irritated throats, turn to mullein, thyme and marshmallow root, herbs that clear mucous, calm spasms and soothe inflamed tissue.^{iv}

Recovery, too, is part of treatment. Herbalists understand the importance of convalescence, not just resolving symptoms but restoring vitality. Alongside rest, nourishing meals, fresh air and clean sheets, herbal support can help rebuild depleted systems. Nutritive and tonic herbs like alfalfa, nettle leaf and green oats help replenish, while gentle bitters such as dandelion and gentian stimulate digestion and appetite. Adaptogenic and adrenal tonic allies including withania, Siberian ginseng and liquorice further support energy and recovery, helping patients regain strength and prevent relapse.^v

Clinical Tips for Practitioners

Prevention is powerful: Use **immune modulating** herbs such as astragalus, cordyceps, lion's mane, reishi, schizandra, Siberian ginseng and withania during winter to build resistance without overstimulating immunity. Immune modulating herbs are traditional tonics for supporting the immune system and are slower acting with a more prolonged effect as compared to immune stimulants. They are usually taken regularly for an extended period of time, often six months to a year or even a lifetime. They are generally considered safe for everyone's use and are often taken traditionally in foods such as bone broth. Many immune modulating herbs are also **adaptogens** that help to restore balance in the immune system when there is a problem.

Intervene early: At the first sign of infection reach for **immune stimulants** (or enhancers) like andrographis, cat's claw, codonopsis, echinacea, olive leaves and thuja to reduce severity and duration.

Fever management: Fever is a natural immune response that helps fight infection by increasing

body temperature and activating the body's repair processes. While often uncomfortable, mild fevers are usually beneficial. However, a fever over 38°C in infants under eight weeks, or over 40°C in others, should be assessed by a doctor, especially if unusual symptoms are present. Herbs that support fever management include **antipyretics (febrifuges)** like andrographis, baical scullcap, feverfew, white willow and yarrow, which reduce high temperatures and help the fever run its course more efficiently. These cooling remedies are often bitters.

Diaphoretics (sudorifics) assist by promoting sweating (diaphoresis): stimulating (warming) types (ginger, thyme, cayenne, cinnamon, hyssop, angelica) are best when the patient feels cold and shivery; relaxing (cooling) types (elder flower, vervain, lime flowers) help when the person feels hot but is not sweating.

Support the lungs: Antitussive and demulcent herbs, which are often mucilaginous, can dampen and soothe the cough reflex such as liquorice, ivy leaf, marshmallow, slippery elm, ribwort and mullein. In cases of persistent cough, or lower respiratory involvement, to loosen tenacious sputum consider elecampane, horseradish, thyme, garlic, ginger, grindelia, ivy leaf, hyssop, liquorice, mullein, fennel, grindelia, aniseed, white horehound, red clover and stone root for their **respiratory antiseptic, expectorant, mucolytic** and **respiratory antispasmodic** actions. Expectorant herbs help to bring mucous up from the lungs and mucolytics alter the production and consistency of mucous, making it thinner and easier to bring up. Pungent herbs tend to have this expectorant effect, which may be due to the warming effect on circulation, increased blood flow to the respiratory mucosa, and possibly a decrease in the thickness of mucus, allowing it to clear up from the lungs.

Assist the sinuses: For sinus congestion and head colds **mucous membrane tonics** like elder flower, eyebright and heartsease may be appropriate.

Prioritise convalescence: Full recovery requires total commitment to convalescence and getting well. After illness, turn to **nutritive** herbs (nettle, alfalfa), **tonics** (green oats), **adaptogens** (withania, astragalus) and gentle **bitters** (dandelion, gentian)

to restore energy and prevent relapse.

Nutrition: There is a persistent tradition in many cultures that respiratory problems are extensions of digestive functions so a healthy diet is important. An infection seldom takes over a well-nourished, well rested body. Follow a general wholefoods diet helping to convert foods into nourishment. **Increase** fresh fruit and vegetables including garlic, onion, ginger and chilli. Vitamin C foods and drinks are important including citrus, kiwifruit, berries. **Avoid** immune suppressant foods including sugar, refined foods, caffeine, alcohol.

Adequate hydration: including filtered warm water, broths, fresh juice, soups and herbal teas. A popular winter drink is lemon and garlic. In a cup add the juice of a lemon and one tablespoon of grated rind, add one teaspoon of finely chopped ginger, one to two cloves of chopped garlic, one tablespoon of Manuka honey (or other honey), pinch of cayenne pepper. Fill to the top with hot water, stir and drink or eat it all. Can be gargled for a sore throat.

Lifestyle:

- Avoid smoking, alcohol, recreational drugs
- Fresh air and sunlight
- Rest, sleep, recuperation
- Ensure there is sufficient emotional and psychological support for optimal recovery, low stress levels and mental calm. Remember to laugh. It has been postulated that laughter, or sense of humour, may affect health through moderation of stress chemicals and/or immunoenhancement.
- Postural drainage, inhalations, vaporisers and chest rubs (e.g. essential oils of eucalyptus, peppermint, lavender or tea tree. Drops can also be placed on the shower floor)
- Gargle saltwater for a sore throat
- Moderate amounts of exercise
- Address indoor pollutants such as mould as they can worsen lung related illnesses.

All the above can contribute to a strong, healthy, empowered individual who is resistant to infection and disease.



12 Liquid Herbal Extracts for Seasonal Immune and Respiratory Health:

HERB NAME	DESCRIPTION	ACTIONS
Andrographis (<i>Andrographis paniculata</i>)	 <p>Commonly known as the 'king of bitters' and 'Indian echinacea', andrographis is used in Ayurveda as immune support for bacterial and viral respiratory tract infections such as influenza, colds, pneumonia, fever, sore throats and bronchitis. Andrographis may be effective for reducing the fever and sore throat due to tonsillitis. Some research shows that high dose andrographis (six grams daily) works as well as paracetamol after three to seven days of treatment. ^{vi}</p>	<p>Immune Modulator</p> <p>Bitter Tonic</p> <p>Antiviral</p> <p>Antibacterial</p> <p>Anti-inflammatory</p> <p>Antipyretic</p>
Angelica (<i>Angelica archangelica</i>)	 <p>Angelica was traditionally viewed as a warming and tonifying agent. Its warming benefit makes it useful in a fever as it produces diaphoresis. As a relaxing expectorant, and antispasmodic, it can be used in lung infections. It is useful in convalescence, debility, fatigue and poor nutritional uptake. In The Essential Book of Herbal Medicine, author Simon Mills says: "there is probably no better convalescence remedy in the Western <i>materia medica</i>." ^{vii}</p>	<p>Anticatarrhal</p> <p>Respiratory Antispasmodic</p> <p>Stimulating Expectorant</p> <p>Diaphoretic</p>
Echinacea (<i>Echinacea purpurea</i> / <i>E. angustifolia</i>)	 <p>Echinacea is the most researched and popular herb for assisting immune function in Western herbal medicine. It has traditionally been used in North America for the prevention and treatment of cold and flu symptoms. As an immune modulator and stimulant, echinacea can be used both as a preventative and as treatment for a wide range of infections. Many studies have proven that echinacea successfully reduces the severity and duration of upper respiratory tract infections and that it can inactivate and/or inhibit many viruses at different levels. ^{viii}</p>	<p>Immune Modulator</p> <p>Immune Stimulant</p> <p>Antimicrobial</p> <p>Antiviral</p> <p>Antipyretic</p>

12 Liquid Herbal Extracts for Seasonal Immune and Respiratory Health: (Cont.)

HERB NAME	DESCRIPTION	ACTIONS
Elderberry (<i>Sambucus nigra</i>)	 <p>Elderberry has become the poster child for immunity, with solid clinical research showing benefits in fighting the viruses that cause colds and flu. It is most frequently used for supporting immune system health and symptoms of upper respiratory infections. Although elderberry is used by many as a year-round supplement for immune support its time to shine is for seasonal immune support during the winter cold and flu season which is now upon us. Elderberry's deliciously tart and sweet flavour makes it easy to enjoy. This makes elderberry liquid extract a mainstay in many herbalists' dispensaries as the go-to herb at the initial signs of a cold or the flu. ^{ix}</p>	Immune Modulator Anti-inflammatory Antiviral Antibacterial
Garlic (<i>Allium sativum</i>)	 <p>Garlic has traditionally been used to support the immune system. It is one of the most effective antimicrobial herbs available and helps prevent and reduce the severity of respiratory infections like the common cold and influenza. A recent review included a study that found that participants who took garlic every day had fewer colds than participants who received placebos. ^x</p>	Antimicrobial Immune Modulator Stimulating Diaphoretic Stimulating Expectorant
Grindelia (<i>Grindelia robusta</i>)	 <p>A sticky and resinous plant that is often used for respiratory ailments, specifically hot, dry coughs with clinging, dried out mucus. Grindelia's antiasthmatic, antispasmodic, bronchodilator, anti-inflammatory and expectorant actions assist in bringing up the mucus while soothing the bronchial tubes, especially in cases of a tight sore chest, dry hacking cough, asthma, whooping cough, bronchitis and emphysema. Not only will grindelia help to bring up stuck mucus but it will also soothe the smooth muscles of the lungs, relaxing them and helping the bronchioles to open, allowing for more air flow. Grindelia is often found to be helpful for asthma when it is accompanied by rapid heartbeat. ^{xi}</p>	Anti-inflammatory Antispasmodic Bronchodilator Expectorant Antibacterial Demulcent Antiasthmatic

12 Liquid Herbal Extracts for Seasonal Immune and Respiratory Health: (Cont.)

HERB NAME	DESCRIPTION	ACTIONS
Heartsease (<i>Viola tricolor</i>)	 Heartsease was used traditionally for its expectorant and anti-inflammatory activities in bronchitis, whooping cough, asthma and the common cold. Additionally, it has been used to soothe irritations in the mucous membranes of the throat, providing relief in cases of respiratory discomfort.	Expectorant Anti-inflammatory Mucous Membrane Tonic
Herbal Head Cold	 A strong, balanced formula that has been specifically designed to reduce the duration and intensity of upper respiratory tract infections. The herbs in Herbal Head Cold complement each other to produce a powerful remedy that effectively targets the infection and reduces congestion. They are elder flowers, eyebright, echinacea, ribwort, yarrow, lime flowers, calendula and cinnamon. They have anti-microbial, anti-viral, anti-bacterial, immune-stimulating, diaphoretic, anti-inflammatory and anti-catarrhal actions. Herbal Head Cold can be taken to either help prevent infection or alleviate the symptoms of a current infection.	Antimicrobial Antiviral Antibacterial Immune Stimulating Diaphoretic Anti-inflammatory Anti-catarrhal
Hyssop (<i>Hyssopus officinalis</i>)	 According to Ayurveda hyssop is considered a drying expectorant and has a long history of use in both Ayurveda and Western herbal medicine in the treatment of respiratory infections. Energetically hyssop is a warming and stimulating herb with a pungent taste that can move stagnation making it perfect for coughs with congested mucous. It is helpful in cases of colds with cough, bronchitis (acute and chronic) and asthma. It is also helpful in alleviating fevers and so can be beneficial in cases where coughs are accompanied by a fever. As a stimulating diaphoretic it warms the body, pushing out coldness and opening the pores. This is especially ideal for when a person feels cold and is shivering with a slight fever. ^{xiii}	Expectorant Anticatarrhal Antispasmodic Antimicrobial

12 Liquid Herbal Extracts for Seasonal Immune and Respiratory Health: (Cont.)

HERB NAME	DESCRIPTION	ACTIONS
Ivy leaf (<i>Hedera helix</i>)	 <p>The traditional European indications for ivy leaf were primarily for the respiratory tract and to this day it is used against diseases of the lower respiratory tract associated with productive cough including the common cold, asthma and acute and chronic bronchitis. In modern times it is administered to improve lung function and symptoms of coughing and expectoration, especially with accompanying obstructive pulmonary complaints and microbial infections. Clinical data supports these indications, especially for children.^{xiv,xv,xvi}</p>	Expectorant Antispasmodic Anticatarrhal Bronchodilator Anti-inflammatory Analgesic Antimicrobial Diaphoretic Antipyretic
Stone root (<i>Collinsonia canadensis</i>)	 <p>One of the first uses of stone root by Eclectics was in the treatment of laryngitis known as "minister's sore throat." They also employed it for chronic laryngitis, pharyngitis, in some cases of chronic bronchitis and when there is a sense of constriction with tickling in throat, with cough arising from use of the voice.^{xvii}</p>	Diaphoretic Expectorant Antispasmodic
Thyme (<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>)	 <p>Thyme has a long history as a treatment for coughs. It has a relaxant effect reducing spasm in the chest while helping to loosen and expel mucous through its expectorant action, making it helpful in the case of coughs associated with thick catarrh in the lungs. Thyme can help in all cases where coughing occurs in conjunction with spasmodic symptoms and in calming dry irritable coughs. Additionally, it is helpful in cases of lower respiratory infection which may contribute to coughing, since it has antimicrobial properties meaning it is beneficial for a broad range of causes of respiratory infection.^{xviii}</p>	Expectorant Antispasmodic Antitussive Antibacterial Antiviral Antimicrobial Anti-inflammatory Analgesic

Immune and Respiratory Herbs and their Actions:

Herb	Actions
Andrographis	Immune modulator, bitter tonic, antiviral, antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, antipyretic
Angelica	Anticatarrhal, antispasmodic (respiratory tract), stimulating expectorant, diaphoretic
Echinacea	Immune modulator, immune stimulant, antimicrobial, antiviral, antipyretic
Elderberry	Immune modulator, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antibacterial
Garlic	Antimicrobial, immune modulator, stimulating diaphoretic, stimulating expectorant
Grindelia	Anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic, bronchodilator, expectorant, antibacterial, demulcent, antiasthmatic
Heartsease	Expectorant, anti-inflammatory, mucous membrane tonic
Herbal Head Cold	Antimicrobial, antiviral, antibacterial, immune stimulating, diaphoretic, anti-inflammatory, anti-catarrhal
Hyssop	Expectorant, anticatarrhal, antispasmodic, antimicrobial
Ivy Leaf	Expectorant, antispasmodic, anticatarrhal, bronchodilator, anti-inflammatory, analgesic, antimicrobial, diaphoretic, antipyretic
Stone Root	Diaphoretic, expectorant, antispasmodic
Thyme	Expectorant, antispasmodic, antitussive, antibacterial, antiviral, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, analgesic

Fast Fire Cider Recipe

Fast fire cider: For many practitioners this herbal staple is their favourite wintertime remedy because it is immune building and sinus clearing. While it's not for the faint hearted (the cayenne can pack a potent punch) it is a good brew to have on hand when the cold and flu season approaches to give the immune system a powerful kick. It can be used as a preventative (taken from mid-autumn and throughout the winter months) or taken for acute immune support at the first sign of cold symptoms.

Ingredients:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup organic raw apple cider vinegar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup organic raw honey
- 90mL Garlic (*Allium sativum*)
- 60mL Horseradish (*Armoracia rusticana*)
- 40mL Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)
- 10mL Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)
- 2mL Cayenne (*Capsicum frutescens*) (Can be adjusted according to taste, e.g. 1mL for those who prefer less heat.)

Instructions:

- Combine the apple cider vinegar and honey in a pot and gently warm to the consistency of a syrup.
- Remove from the heat and add the herbal extracts.
- Stir well to combine.
- Pour into a 500mL amber glass bottle and label
- Store in a cool, dark place (for up to a year) or in the fridge to extend the shelf life. Gently shake before using. Enjoy.

Yield: 500mL

Maintenance dose: 10mL shot once or twice a day.

Acute immune support: 10mL every 3-4 hours during an active infection.

It can be diluted with a small amount of water if desired or added to hot water with fresh lemon as a tea. Fire cider is best for cold and damp tissue states. Do not give to children under 12 months old.



INTERVENTION	Antibacterial, Antimicrobial	Anticatarrhal	Anti-inflammatory	Antipyretic	Antitussive	Antiviral	Diaphoretic	Expectorant	Immune Stimulant &/or Immune Modulator
Andrographis	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓
Angelica		✓					✓	✓	
Echinacea	✓			✓		✓			✓
Elderberry	✓		✓			✓			✓
Garlic	✓						✓	✓	✓
Grindelia	✓		✓					✓	
Heartsease			✓					✓	
Herbal Head Cold	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓
Hyssop	✓	✓						✓	
Ivy Leaf	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Stone Root							✓	✓	
Thyme	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	

Resources

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