

WINTER HEALTH

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General Health Tips

1. Drink plenty of water, teas, and warm soups.
2. Get plenty of rest for a healthy immune system.
3. Reduce your intake of sugar and high fructose corn syrup. Even a small amount of sugar can suppress the immune system for several hours.
4. Traditionally vegetables and fruits are best eaten cooked rather than eaten raw in the winter. They can be sautéed, baked, or roasted.
5. Add medicinal mushrooms such as maitake and shitake to your diet for their immune enhancing properties.
6. Eat garlic and onions. The "stinky" antimicrobial oils are secreted via the lungs to help ward off microbial invaders.
7. Eat less cold foods, such as salads and raw vegetables and fruits and dairy. Eat warm and cooked foods. This often entails changing your breakfast from cold cereals and bagels to hot oatmeal or scrambled eggs.

About Soups and Medicinal Foods for the Winter

Soups have been used as a food and a medicine for thousands of years, traditionally as a way to administer medicine and food. Basically a soup is like a fancy tea. It is a method of extracting the goodies from vegetables, herbs and spices. Soups are a perfect one-pot meal for busy individuals; they can be brewed in a crockpot while you are at work.

Soups have many health benefits. Cooking predigests the food and herbs for easy assimilation, this can be particularly good for people who may have difficulty digesting food, with common symptoms of gas, bloating, and feeling tired after a meal. Soups also offer fluids to the transient water drinker. The warmth of soup can help to clear a congested nose and moisten the dry air in wintertime.

Broths have traditionally been used as a food during convalescence, for individuals are recuperating from a surgery, trauma, or illness. The gelatin in broths, a byproduct of cooking animal bones, is rich in proline, lysine and glycine, conditionally essential amino acids. Broth consumption can improve collagen synthesis, bone mineralization, and has a sparing effect on protein utilization for people with low protein diets.

In general, it is best to buy the ingredients for your soups fresh from the market. Canned veggies and soups are usually high in sodium, and may contain potentially harmful preservatives, such as bisphenol. Vegetable-rich soups can be a great source of fiber, antioxidants, and nutrients, vegetables are the most underutilized and reliable preventative medicine available! Listed below are other healing medicinal ingredients to include in your soups.

Medicinal Foods and Herbs in Soups

Garlic, *Allium sativum*: Garlic has diverse medicinal properties. Of the 32 clinical studies done on garlic all but 4 showed positive results for improving cardiovascular health, cancer prevention,

circulation and immunity. Garlic has lipid lowering benefits, possible anti-atherosclerotic effects, and possible anti-hypertensive effects. It is a potent anti-microbial, the oils of which are secreted via the lungs. Garlic is safely consumed as a food, but should be avoided as a supplement for anyone who is taking blood thinning, prescription medications.

Shitake Mushrooms, *Lentinus edodes*: Shitake is the most commonly found (in grocery stores), medicinal mushroom in the west. Button mushrooms do not have many healing properties, but Shitakes like Maitake and Reishi, is one of the best-studied medicinal mushrooms. Research has demonstrated immuno-modulating, anti-viral, anti-bacterial, cholesterol reducing properties.

Astragalus, *Astragalus membranaceus*: Clinical trials have demonstrated that astragalus has health promoting effects in the elderly and individuals undergoing chemotherapy. Traditionally used to prevent colds and flu (not to be used during acute infection), trials have demonstrated and supported the use of Astragalus as an antiviral and immune-modulator.

Kelp, *Nereocystis leutkeana*: Sea vegetables are rich in minerals; they reduce the toxicity of radioactive chemicals and heavy metals in the body. Kelp is 50% by weight minerals. A good salt substitute, kelp is higher in potassium than sodium. Kelp is a great detoxifying agent, rich in immune building minerals such as zinc and selenium.

Rebecca's Mushroom Barley Spinach Soup

½ cup pearl barley uncooked	8 oz spinach leaves
2 cups water	1 tsp salt
4 cups chicken broth	3 tbsp soy sauce
2 tbsp butter or olive oil	1 tbsp white grape juice
1 onion	½ tsp kelp powder
5 garlic cloves	dash of rice vinegar
1/2 lb shitake and/or maitake mushrooms	fresh ground black pepper

Place barley and water and chicken broth in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, cover, reduce heat and simmer until the barley is tender, approximately 20-30 minutes. Meanwhile melt butter/oil in skillet, add onions, garlic, mushrooms, and ½ tsp salt and kelp. Sauté for 10-12 minutes, stirring occasionally, until everything is very tender. Stir in soy sauce, vinegar, and white grape juice. Combine barley with mushroom mixture. Grind in black pepper, add the rest of the salt, simmer, partially covered for 15 minutes over low heat. Add spinach and cook another 5-10 minutes. Taste and serve.

Resources and References:

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