

# 8 Essential herbs to boost your immune system all winter long

The cold winter months not only bring in coughs, colds and flu, we find it harder to stay warm and our circulation tends to be less effective at throwing out toxins. Not least, we feel less energized and able to find that extra bit of energy

Keeping the immune system in balance is of the most importance in all stages of life. As the natural defense system, it is designed to spring into action to support every area of the body. If your body is your castle, your immune system is the soldiers patrolling the perimeter and every corridor within the walls.

Many herbs have traditionally been used to support the immune system. These botanicals promote a healthy response to all the winter aspects, support healthy inflammatory responses and promote a naturally healthy microbial balance, among other uses.

Here are **8 key herbs** to help with all those winter aspects.



## **Astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*)**

Astragalus root is one of the most powerful immune-building plants on the planet. This adaptogen herb due to its antiviral capabilities it has long been used in Traditional Chinese Medicine for over 2,000 years to beat stress and fight disease at the same time.

Prized for its ability to restore health and extend life astragalus contains anemia, which improves blood counts. Add this herb to soups to fight fatigue and boost your immune system during cold and flu season.

### ***Tips for Daily Use***

When you feel a cold or the flu coming in incorporate astragalus into a Herbal Chicken Soup (2 to 3 teaspoons dried astragalus) or a **Astragalus Root Tea** (3 to 5 tablespoons dried astragalus root slices).



### **Andrographis (Andrographis paniculata).**

Sometimes called “Indian echinacea,” andrographis reduces the duration and severity of cold symptoms, and it also might help prevent upper respiratory infections, studies show. Compounds in andrographis appear to stimulate immune function and halt viral growth.

#### ***Tips for Daily Use***

A typical dosage of andrographis is 400 mg three times a day.



### **Cinnamon Stick**

A fragrant winter favourite, this herb is able to bring circulation as far as cold fingers and toes. It is also a potent anti-viral and anti-bacterial, making it a vital herb for the worst of the flu season. Not only does it fight these microbes, its constituent cinnamaldehyde provides welcome pain reduction and is sedative. It continues to be useful post colds and flu, during the often debilitating convalescence stage. It is also a blood sugar stabilizer useful for helping calm down any post-festive sweet tooth over-indulgence.

### ***Tips for Daily Use***

Cinnamon and green tea and both have value for their flavor and health-promoting properties. Feel free to combine them together.



### **Echinacea (*Echinacea purpurea*)**

This antiviral and antibacterial herb contains polysaccharides that increase the body's production of white blood cells, for preventing and treating colds, flu and other infections. Echinacea stimulates infection-fighting immune cells and increases the production of other immune compounds, such as interferon.

#### ***Tips for Daily Use***

Echinacea works best when taken frequently at the first sign of infection: 30 to 60 drops of liquid extract or 1 to 2 capsules (300 to 400 mg each) every two hours for the first 24 to 48 hours, followed by the same dosage four times daily for three days after symptoms disappear.



### **Eleuthero (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*)**

Well-known as an adaptogenic herb (it helps the body more easily adapt to stressors), eleuthero root improves immune function. Eleuthero is highly effective for cold relief when taken in combination with the herb Andrographis, in order to help reduce cold duration and severity, when treatment was started at the early stages of the cold. In general, it takes four to five days of treatment with the Andrographis/ Eleuthero combination in order to experience maximum cold relief.

#### ***Tips for Daily Use***

For best results, take eleuthero for at least three months to strengthen immune response.



## **Black elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*)**

Black Elderberry traditionally has been used for immune support, both as a daily tonic and at the start of an immune challenge. Because of its immune-modulating and antioxidant properties, Black Elderberry is able to work at the cellular level and provide deep support for overall immune health. By normalizing and promoting the production of cytokines (an action that is essential for overall wellness), the immune system is able to maintain balance during those winter months when our bodies need all the plant power they can get.

### ***Tips for Daily Use***

A teaspoon of elderberry syrup can combat flu symptoms and help people with sinus pains or chronic fatigue find relief.



## **Ginger Root (*Zingiber officinale*)**

This pungent root is a powerful antihistamine and decongestant that delivers a one-two punch against cold symptoms.

### ***Tips for Daily Use***

Add it to stir-fried dishes or boil it to make a cup of ginger tea with some added lemon and honey for a pleasant and healing hot drink.



### **Green tea (*Camellia sinensis*)**

Cultivating the habit of drinking green tea regularly can help strengthen immunity. Green tea contains potent antioxidant compounds that neutralize free radicals and prevent damage to the immune system. In addition, green tea stimulates the liver to secrete interferon, an immune compound that helps fight infection.

#### ***Tips for Daily Use***

To bolster immune function, drink 3 or more cups of green tea daily.