



winter wellness

A HERBALIST'S GUIDE.

by Colleen Kennedy

In Ireland, we are blessed to be living in a most westerly point of Europe. This, however, provides weather-related challenges to our wellbeing.

Our wild Atlantic location brings with it a dampness which pervades the environment and our delicate systems, becoming the basis of many illnesses we commonly see this time of year. This dampness has been remedied throughout the ages and in many cultures across the world. When you think of damp, it conjures up feelings of cold, mucous, congestion, slowness, lethargy and pallor. To counteract this we can use foods and herbs with an aromatic and pungent nature to promote warmth within.

Beneficial foods which offer these warming properties include onions, garlic, leeks, horseradish, ginger, wasabi, mustard greens, turnips and radishes. They have a pungent nature which can heat up and cut through the dampness and cold. You'll recognise this sensation when you take a little wasabi or horseradish paste on the tongue!

These foods also enhance circulation and will promote blood flow to the extremities thus softening the impact of disorders of the circulatory system such as Raynaud's Disease. By warming the stomach and the blood they help with digestion and absorption of food, thereby strengthening the body to prevent disease. By contrast, cold, raw foods, dairy and sugar will promote dampness, so be conscious of your own tolerance levels.

Stimulant and digestive herbs are used to dispel cold and damp and can also aid expectoration of mucous from the lungs and nasal passages. Herbs and spices we use here are cinnamon, cayenne, ginger, cardamom, clove and black pepper. These are easily incorporated into any diet. Here is a recipe for a warming tea that is beneficial in the winter months.



Inner Fire Igniter Tea

Ginger 1 thumb-sized piece, peeled and grated

Lemon quartered with the skin on

Cloves 5-8 studded into the lemon quarters

Ground Cinnamon ½ tsp

Cayenne Powder ¼ tsp (if tolerated)

Honey 1-2 tsp (Added after tea has cooled a little so as not to destroy the beneficial enzymes)

Cover ingredients with 1 pint of water and simmer or stew for 15 mins. When cooled slightly, add the honey.

This makes 3 small cups or 2 larger mugs. 1 small cup sipped before meals will aid digestion and assimilation of nutrients too.

Sometimes I add a handful of carrageen moss or thyme to aid the expectorant qualities of the tea. If you have any inflammation of the stomach, it is best to avoid the cayenne pepper.



It's quite normal to pick up the odd sniffle, but when you see a recurring pattern or you are finding an infection hard to shake, herbs are invaluable. There are many herbs at our fingertips to use against both viral and bacterial infections. Consistent use of herbs is key and it's important to use the proper doses. Taking them for a day or two often isn't enough to stop stubborn viruses from replicating. Doses vary from 3 to 5 times per day and will steadily strengthen the host to fight off infection. Teas, soups and stews are all great ways to incorporate these healing herbs and spices into the diet.

I prescribe individual tincture blends to help with different infections or to give the immune system some

support. Herbs I often use are elder, licorice, echinacea, berberine family, chinese skullcap, boneset, ginger, trikatu, astragalus and olive leaf. It really depends on the person and what stage of illness they are at. Some herbs are better taken in the acute stage while others are best suited for chronic infections.

Keep your easy-to-grow herbs like sage, thyme, oregano and rosemary handy. These possess many phytochemicals which are antimicrobial, and are therefore beneficial for gastrointestinal health. You can think of them as your outdoor medicine chest of prevention! This is much appreciated when the winter vomiting bug comes to town.

Finally, don't forget the importance

of rest. Sleep is crucial for health and wellbeing. Turning in a bit earlier and unplugging from technology in the evenings will help you to get more hours of healing sleep.

Colleen runs a clinic in the Body and Mind Health Centre, Rosbeg, Westport, Co. Mayo and also lectures at CNM Dublin and Galway based campuses. If you would like to find out how you can train at CNM for an exciting new career in Naturopathic Nutrition, Herbal Medicine, Homeopathy or Acupuncture, join us at our next free open evening. Reserve your place online.

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