The pain of shingles, the harsh cough and sore throat of respiratory infections, and the body aches and runny noses of seasonal viruses all have one thing in common: a compromised immune system. They are also difficult to treat conventionally, and can take a long time to release their grip.

In most cases, our immune system keeps us in good shape. We can, and do, have viruses in our bodies all the time. However, if our natural defenses are in order, they don’t cause any trouble. Unfortunately, it doesn’t take much to throw us off balance: stress, lack of sleep, poor diet, certain drugs – all of them conspire to suppress the immune system.

The good news is that there are powerful natural ingredients that can help you avoid these troublesome problems. Best yet, at higher dosages for a limited duration – about 1 or 2 days – they can actually reverse viral illnesses and put you on the path to natural healing.

In this *Terry Talks Nutrition*[^1], I’d like to review a combination of daily nutrients that can help you keep your immune system strong throughout the year, and – in higher dosages – give your immune system an additional boost when you need it.

### Nature’s Immune Booster – Elderberry:

**Elderberry** (*Sambucus nigra*) is probably one of my favorite immune-boosting botanical ingredients. Of the herbs clinically studied and most often recognized for fighting colds, flus, and overall immune system defense, it is one of the most reliable.

Elderberry is well-known in America in supplements, but in Europe, Africa, and Asia, it has long been a part of culinary and medical tradition. The berries are often used in jams, jellies, and pies, and both the flowers and berries have been used specifically for their health benefits. In fact, the flowers were made into infusions to relieve symptoms of rheumatism, and were also used externally to help heal wounds.

Anthocyanins are one of the major constituents of elderberry. Not only are they responsible for the color of the berry, they are powerful antioxidants, and have noted anti-inflammatory and anti-viral properties, too.

The anti-viral abilities of elderberry interfere with the structure of viruses, preventing them from entering cell walls and replicating. They also activate the body’s own anti-viral “police force” of phagocytes (specialized white blood cells) to move into action.

That’s why the elderberry extract I recommend is an Austrian variety that has been standardized to provide at least 15% anthocyanins. Austrian-grown elderberry is one of the best, because this variety produces a deep purple fruit that is especially rich in anthocyanin content. In fact, Austria is a center of elderberry production in Europe because of its combination of growing season, climate, and superior harvesting and processing techniques.

I would like to add one thing about processing here. There are a lot of ways to get superior extracts, but when it comes to elderberry I prefer freeze-drying. That’s because freeze-drying not only removes the water content, but because it is such a low-temperature process, it stops cellular deterioration, enzyme activity and microbiological reactions that would otherwise reduce the extract’s effectiveness. Freeze-drying actually retains the highest levels of antioxidants, anthocyanins and other components, and has the longest shelf life of any other drying process.

Other important components in these incredible berries include quercetin, rutin, and other strong flavonoids, which all help strengthen your immune system. Elderberry extract has been shown to be especially effective when combined with vitamin C and zinc.

But the best thing about elderberry and other anti-viral nutrients is that they disrupt viruses and restore the body’s ability to fight invaders without causing the side effects or drug resistance that you see from prescription medications. And there’s no doubt that elderberry is powerful. It has shown a strong effect against 13 different pathogens, including *Streptococcus pyogenes* and *Escherichia coli*.

### Vitamins are Vital for our Defenses:

We typically think about vitamin A and how it relates to night-blindness or healthy skin, but the fact is, vitamin A is vital to our ability to fight off infections. When people are deficient in this nutrient, they are more prone to being ill. Our immune response depends on vitamin A, for strong macrophage and natural killer cell protection, so this power extends beyond simple cold and flu prevention. By boosting lymphocyte production, vitamin A can help our cells fight many threats, including tumor growth.

For example, patients who were treated with vitamin A following surgery saw an increase in lymphocytes – the white blood cells that police our system when we are most vulnerable to infection.

But vitamin A is important all of the time. Studies have shown that even for those who aren’t deficient, it provides an immune system boost.

There are different sources of vitamin A, but for immune strengthening retinyl acetate is the best form because it kills viruses. Beta-carotene just can’t compete. Remember, beta-carotene is a “pro-vitamin A”, which means that while it can turn into vitamin A in the body, it doesn’t necessarily mean that it will. You need the potent effects of this form of vitamin A.

**Vitamin C** is probably one of the best-known immune boosters. The sources for vitamin C vary, but the one thing that stands out about vitamin C is that it does an amazing job reducing the severity of colds and flus, and taken as a preventative nutrient, may reduce the incidence of colds by as much as 50%!

Beyond colds and flus, vitamin C appears to have a natural anti-histamine effect, and alleviates allergy and other respiratory symptoms.

### SHINGLES/IMMUNE HEALTH

**When in doubt, always consult your physician or health care practitioner. This column is to provide you with information to maintain your health.**

### More...

**To your good health, Terry... Naturally**

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**Vitamin D** has been getting a lot more attention in the past few years, but I feel that it is still just *beginning* to get the accolades it deserves. Not only is vitamin D critical for bone development, cancer prevention, tumor reduction, and healthy heart and brain function, it is also a must for the immune system.

If you live in a northern climate, chances are good that you are vitamin D deficient. Even if you spend time outdoors in the summer, when your body’s chances of synthesizing vitamin D from sun exposure are the greatest, you could still be at risk.

Older adults, people with darker skin, and those who are overweight can’t synthesize vitamin D easily. The best guarantee of vitamin D intake is through supplementation. There are two different forms of vitamin D available as supplements: cholecalciferol (Vitamin D3) and ergocalciferol (Vitamin D2). The vitamin D3 form is considered the most absorbable because it matches the form that the body creates naturally.

And because vitamin D is responsible for so many health factors, those deficient in this nutrient usually show a susceptibility to allergies, flu, and respiratory ailments. In fact, a long-term British study found that increased vitamin D3 corresponded with a lower risk of infection.

A recent medical survey also found that vitamin D deficiency (abbreviated to “VDD”) was, in their words, “positively correlated with prevalence of allergies.” Even after they averaged out the differences for age, gender, race and other factors, vitamin D deficiency still was a significant contributor to these problems. They also found “a positive correlation with allergy subtypes such as prevalence of rashes, sneezing, and sinus infections with low vitamin D.” So proper vitamin D intake isn’t just about preventing respiratory problems during the cold and flu season – it is important all the time.

**Minerals That Make a Difference:**

**Magnesium** is one of the minerals we need for everything; cellular energy, metabolism, muscle strength, heart health, and, of course, our natural immune defenses. Magnesium helps keep the bronchial system running smoothly as well – an important consideration for anyone suffering from acute respiratory viruses.

**Calcium lactate**, along with magnesium, supports healthy cell structure and suppresses viral growth – both important considerations when dealing with viral intruders that use the cells to replicate. The stronger the cellular integrity, the less chance viruses can get a foothold. Calcium lactate – an easily absorbed form – along with magnesium, also fights other virus-caused irritations, including fever blisters.

**Zinc** is an important mineral for keeping the immune system running smoothly. In one study, zinc reduced cold symptom duration by 42% when taken on the first day.

Zinc is a required nutrient for T-lymphocyte (white blood cell) activity. It helps our body’s natural “guards” keep out potentially dangerous invaders, including bacterial and viral infections. It is what is known as an “immunomodulator,” which means it assists the immune system when the situation demands it, but otherwise simply helps us stay healthy.

There have been a number of studies about zinc and how well it prevents colds and flus. Much of the variation in effectiveness has been, in expert opinion, due to the forms of zinc used in the studies. Like many nutrients, some mineral forms are simply better used than others.

In fact, Zinc gluconate was the form of zinc used in the studies that have shown a 7 day reduction in the duration of cold symptoms. This is the zinc that I recommend for anyone using this mineral to address viral problems, whether it is the common cold, the flu, or something more problematic, like shingles.

**Reversing Shingles Quickly**

I absolutely recommend this combination of nutrients for battling shingles. One person I knew had tried just about everything to rid herself of this viral illness and nothing was effective. Shingles are notoriously difficult to treat. They are caused by a “flaring up” of the same virus that causes chicken pox, but years after the original bout of chicken pox. The virus causes patches of painful blisters on the skin that can appear on the face, along the chest or stomach, or on the arms and hands. It is not a short-term problem, and can take weeks – even *months* – before the patches begin to clear. In the meantime, the affected skin itches and burns, and other flu-like symptoms are common, too.

In any event, the person who came to me for advice took one tablet of this combination every waking hour for 2 to 3 days – a high initial boost that knocked out the major skin symptoms. Then, she decreased her dosage to 1 tablet each day to keep the virus in check.

**Keep Your Immune System Finely Tuned**

In any viral attack, I recommend a heavy initial dosage to quickly get your immune system back into balance. Consider doing that for the first couple of days, and then work back to just one tablet as you feel healthier again. This combination is meant to be used every day, because your immune system needs support throughout the year for you to stay healthy.

For additional support, I would recommend using these ingredients with a strong bio-typed concentrated plant oil combination of ravensara, myrtle, thyme, and bay. They also provide a powerful way to keep your body’s natural resistance at its best.

We all have busy schedules, and it can be too easy to ignore your health until immune system problems come up. These amazing nutrients, used daily, can help prevent that.

Terry recommends a product with these ingredients.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A (as retinyl acetate)</td>
<td>10,000 IU</td>
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<td>Vitamin C (ascorbic acid)</td>
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<td>Zinc (as zinc gluconate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elderberry (Sambucus nigra)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Bioflavonoids 50%</td>
<td>50 mg</td>
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(from citrus fruits)

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