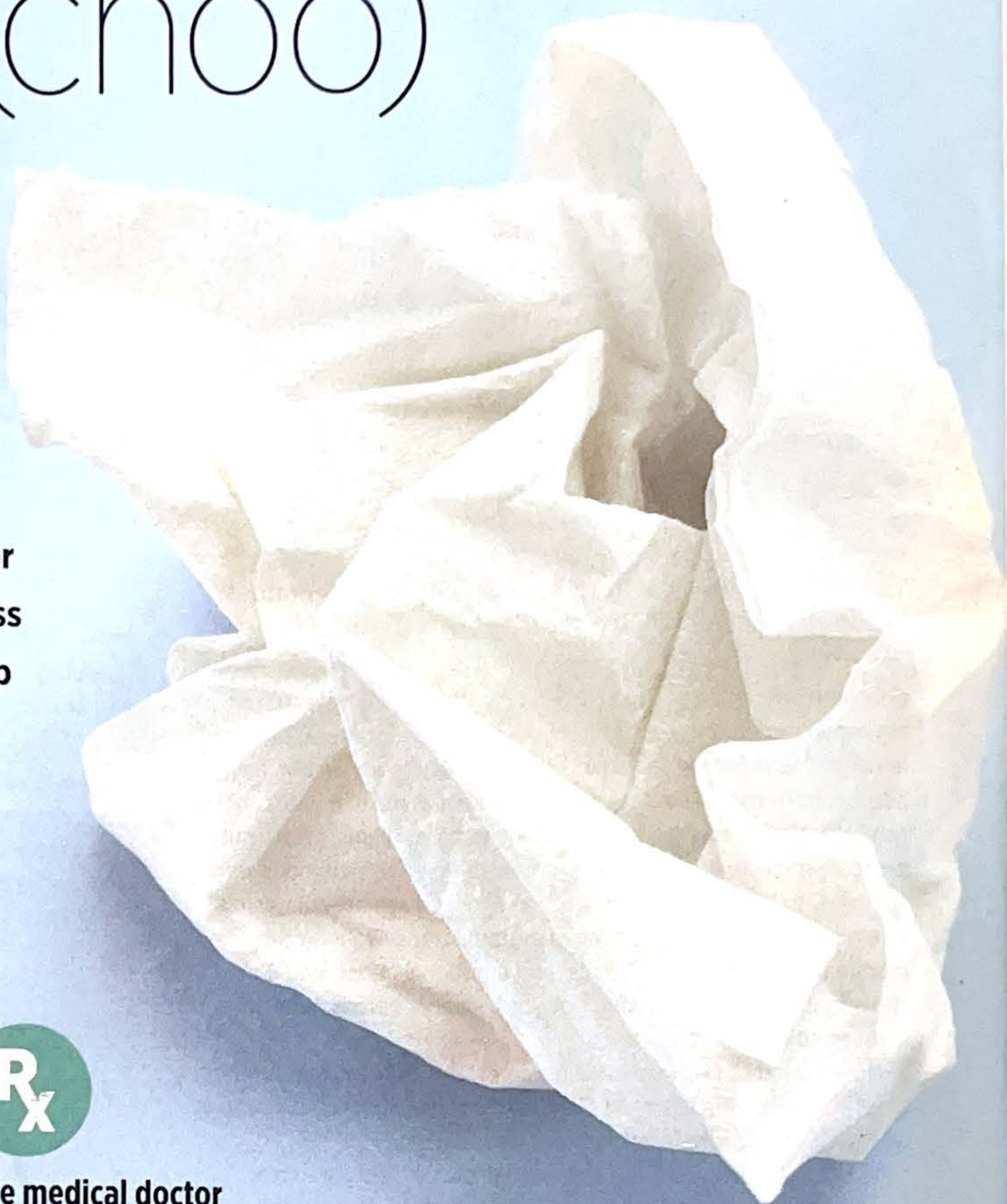


# The A(choo) Team

When a cold or the flu hits, wouldn't it be nice to know you have your own team of health professionals from across the spectrum to help you recover faster and stronger? Don't sweat it (unless they tell you to); we've rounded up their best advice in one place.

BY LISA VAN DE GEYN



It's the most wonderful time of the year...for a virus. The chilly temperatures drive us—and our germs—indoors, where bugs thrive and travel from person to person faster than you can say "Gesundheit!" Canadians usually suffer from sore throats and runny noses between November and April (it's estimated that we catch two to five colds each year), and it's estimated that up to one-quarter of us will experience stomach upsets, muscle aches and other symptoms of influenza. To help you cope with the nastiness, we've assembled a team of cold-and-flu specialists. Their advice—spanning diet, exercise and over-the-counter meds—will help mount your defences and beat back the bugs.



## The medical doctor

Jill Blaser, Saskatoon

### PREVENT

› **Keep your hands superclean.** This isn't new advice, but what you might not know is that cold viruses can live for about two hours on your hands, so stock up on soap and sanitizers.

### TREAT

› If you have a cold but are otherwise healthy and on no other prescription medications, **try a decongestant** (such as pseudoephedrine with an antihistamine for nasal symptoms) and/or a cough suppressant (dextromethorphan) or a cough expectorant (guaifenesin). "These treatments may reduce the symptoms of a cold but not the duration," says Blaser. If you've got the flu, stick with acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen.

› Whether it's a cold or the flu, **stay in bed.** "The truth is, there's very little your doctor can do for you. Rest so your valiant immune system can fight the virus."



## The naturopathic doctor

Jennifer Bunzenmeyer, Calgary

### PREVENT

› Cut out or **reduce sugar and increase your veggie intake**; aim for five to eight servings of vegetables each day.

› **Pop some echinacea** when you first feel cold or flu symptoms and continue for as long as they last (but don't exceed eight weeks, as it may begin to stress the liver).

› **Try hydrotherapy.** At the end of your shower, turn the water to comfortably warm and let it spray over your upper chest for one minute, then turn it to cold for 30 seconds. Repeat three times. "This enhances lymphatic flow

Make your own ginger tea to fight fever and ease aches and pains.



and has been used traditionally for immune-building properties," says Bunzenmeyer.

**TREAT**

› Sip **ginger tea**. "It has constituents called gingerol and shogaol that are fever-fighting and cough-suppressing and help with aches and pains. Make it by dicing a one-inch-square root of ginger and boiling it in two cups of water with garlic for three to four minutes."

› **Clear sinuses with steam inhalation**: add up to three drops each of eucalyptus oil and oregano oil to a bowl of hot water and breathe in the vapours for three to five minutes.



**The certified personal trainer**

Jenny Kong Kam Wa, Richmond Hill, Ont.

**PREVENT**

› "Sticking to an **exercise routine** will, in the long term, help with prevention by making you stronger and healthier," says Kong Kam Wa, also a muscle activation technique specialist. "Then, if you feel a cold coming on, do enough to challenge your body, but don't overwork it because your body might already be more stressed than usual. You don't need to be at an athlete's level to benefit from exercise. Just do it one motion at a time, one minute at a time, one day at a time. Next thing you know, you won't remember the last time you got a cold!"

› If you do decide to work out when under the weather, always remember to **wipe down the equipment** when you're through so you don't pass your germs to the person after you.

**TREAT**

› **Listen to your body**. If you're up to working out, lower your intensity. If you're not feeling it, skip your fitness regimen until you've recovered.

› If you feel good enough to do a little something, **adapt your workout** and stick to lifting weights. "You can keep the intensity up by increasing muscle tension and time under tension, and not get your heart rate too high, especially if you feel congested."

› Try **body-weight squats** performed at a tempo of 5550: count for five seconds to get into squat position, five seconds to hold it, five seconds to come up from the hold, then move on to the next rep without a break. Do as many as you can.



**The doctor of traditional Chinese medicine**

Karyn Smith, Vancouver

**PREVENT**

› See a doctor of Chinese medicine for a **lesson in moxibustion**. "In this treatment, an herbal stick is burned and held close to the skin surface of specific acupuncture points, such as zu san li (ST 36)," says Smith. The purpose of this heat therapy is to warm the skin, rid the body of illness and stimulate the "flow of chi" from head to toe. "I show clients how to use moxibustion safely so they can do it at home regularly."

**TREAT**

› On the first day you feel symptoms coming on, take a hot bath, then bundle yourself up really well so you **sweat the cold pathogen out** of your system.

› Seek **acupuncture** to treat some symptoms, such as headache, nasal congestion, cough, fever and sore throat.

› **Medicinal herbs** can help you feel better faster. Take them in teas brewed from the raw ingredients, in ready-made teas or powdered formulas. Here are some helpful ones:

• **Licorice root**, for coughs from colds and to boost energy and chi (check with your doctor about conflicts, including pregnancy and high blood pressure).

• **Cinnamon twigs**, to promote sweating to expel the cold or flu pathogen, warm the body and help relieve pain.

• **Fresh gingerroot**, to warm the body, disperse the cold or flu pathogen, alleviate nausea and help stop cough from colds.

• **Fresh mint**, for colds accompanied by sore throat, red eyes and headache.



**The registered dietitian**

Amanda Nash, Winnipeg

**PREVENT**

› **Get enough vitamin C** by eating plenty of peppers, strawberries, oranges and broccoli.

› **Increase your zinc intake** if you feel a cold coming on. Found in wheat bran, whole grains, seafood, beans, poultry, beef and seeds, zinc is a key ingredient in keeping the immune system in tip-top shape. "Some research shows that taking a zinc supplement within 24 hours of the onset of a cold can help decrease symptoms," says Nash. Ask your health-care provider or pharmacist about the right dosage before you start.

› **Push the probiotics**. For ongoing immunity, consistency is key. "Probiotics must be taken every day to affect your health. Research shows that in order for probiotics to help fight colds, you need to consume them daily for at least three months." Look for food sources and speak to your health-care provider about supplements to find the right dosage.

**TREAT**

› **Drink fluids**. The more you get, the better, and that includes water, tea, coffee, juice and soup, though water should be your primary source of fluid. "Hot fluids such as tea are helpful for a cold, as they can provide nasal comfort, keep your respiratory tract moist and help with a sore throat, runny nose and chills."

› **Hold steady with the probiotics**. The good bacteria in yogurt and kefir, as well as miso, tempeh, some cereals and some granola bars, can help your body find balance while a cold or flu virus runs its course. "Besides improving immunity, probiotics can improve the balance of good bacteria in the gut, synthesize vitamins and help control diarrhea related to the illness."



A cup of yogurt a day may keep the cold virus away!