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Mom Was Right! Chicken Soup Is Powerful Medicine

Your mother did it; so did your grandmother, great-grandmother and the countless generations of women before her. For centuries, mothers have turned to chicken soup as their first defense against seasonal sniffles and colds. As a preventive health-care specialist, Dr. Christiana continues this tradition by encouraging patients to turn to nutritious "comfort foods" - such as chicken soup - as a means of preventing colds and flu. Keeping up with the latest in nutritional research, however, isn't an easy task. Although Tv, newspapers and magazines inundate the general public with nutritional information, it's often hard to make sense of all the "sound bites;" especially when the messages are contradictory or change over time. And going to the source - medical journals - can be equally as confusing.

That's why Dr. Christiana provides patients with research-based nutritional information that's easy to digest (all puns intended)! By addressing one topic at a time, with clear and concise explanations written in "plain English," Dr. Christiana helps patients effortlessly grasp complex nutritional concepts - and learn to comfortably make related dietary modifications. This week's topic: the medicinal properties of chicken soup.

The History of Soup as Medicine

Chicken soup is perhaps the most celebrated of all folk remedies. Historians believe that the ancient Greeks prescribed chicken soup to ward off illness. And, the 12th century writings of Egyptian court physician and philosopher, Moshe ben Maimonides, also recommend chicken soup for respiratory tract symptoms.

New Research Proves Old Truth

A just-published study proves that centuries of folklore are right on target: chicken soup is powerful medicine (Chest 2000 Oct; 118:1150-7).

Scientists from the Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine Section of the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska, studied the effect of chicken soup on neutrophils - the white blood cells responsible for stimulating inflammation and mucus release during infection that, in turn, provoke coughing and congestion.

The researchers exposed neutrophils to infectious stimuli in laboratory dishes. This mixture was then doused with various amounts of either homemade or commercial chicken soup. Results showed that chicken soup - directly from the garden or a can - inhibited the migration of neutrophils toward the cause of the infection.

According to researchers, this inhibition - in a human - would block the inflammation process associated with cold symptoms. "The current study, therefore, presents evidence that chicken soup might have an anti-inflammatory activity, namely the inhibition of neutrophil migration," noted study author Stephen Rennard, MD, FCCP.

Homemade soup was more reliable in preventing neutrophil migration than store-bought recipes, whose antiinflammatory action varied widely. A dose/response relationship was also observed: the more chicken soup the cells were subjected to the more effective the remedy. When scientists isolated the components of the homemade soup (chicken, onions, sweet potato, parsnips, turnips, carrots, celery stems and parsley) they found that each individual ingredient displays anti-inflammatory properties on its own.

Hot Stuff

The temperature of chicken soup is, in part, responsible for its medicinal properties. Heat has been shown to destroy viruses and bacteria in the mouth and throat, soothe inflammation and dissolve congestion-causing mucous. However, temperature alone doesn't account for this ancient remedy's disease fighting actions; most scientists agree that chicken soup is more effective than mere hot water at curbing cold and flu (Chest 1978 Oct; 74:408-10).

Make A Stink!

When simmering up an illnessbusting soup, don't be afraid to make a stink! Pungent-smelling' ingredients - such as cayenne pepper, onions, leeks and garlic are soup's most powerful secret weapons. Scientific research has identified these herbs and vegetables as potent antibacterial and antiviral agents, with pungency ratings capable of unclogging blocked airways. What's more, these healthy ingredients contain powerful antioxidant chemicals which work to prevent future illness.

Meat-Free Alternatives

Can vegetarians and vegans reap the health reward\$ of chicken soup without the chicken? "Yes," say experts. Although little research exists on the medicinal properties of poultry-free "chicken" soup, nutritionists say the vegetarian ingredients in the meatless variety contain an abundance of healthboosting elements; making "chickenfree" soup an equal contender in the war on flu symptoms.

To make "chicken-free" chicken soup, substitute chicken broth with organic vegetable or mushroom broth. In place of chicken chunks, toss in blocks of firm tofu.

A Cuppa Love

Although chicken soup has been scientifically shown to inhibit the chemical reactions that spur cold symptoms, a patient's attitude toward the remedy may also play a role - a phenomenon known as the placebo effect. That's why individuals who believe that chicken soup can cure colds are more likely to benefit from the remedy than are skeptics.

In addition, knowing that a loved one took the time to prepare a homemade cup of soup generates a powerful sense of well-being that enhances the healing process. Studies support the theory that feeling cared for wards off disease. And, nurturing is not only good for the patient; it also benefits the caregiver. Ongoing research suggests that people who take time out to care for other living things (people, pets or plants) enjoy less illness and longer lives than nonnurturers. So, the next time your friend or loved one is "under the weather," do him or her - and yourself - a favor by simmering up a batch of homemade chicken soup!

**Our purpose is to educate and adjust families toward optimal health
with natural chiropractic care.**