

Garlic: An All-Star Winter Remedy

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Garlic (*Allium sativum*) is one of our most versatile medicines, providing respiratory, immune, digestive and cardiovascular support. Many excellent varieties grow happily and store well in a variety of climates and are readily available at farmer's markets. As a culinary herb, garlic is available in the produce aisle of coops and grocery stores and can be purchased with food stamps, making it a local, relatively inexpensive and widely available remedy.

Because garlic stimulates immune function and its volatile antimicrobial and mucus-thinning compounds are excreted partially through the lungs, it is especially valuable in preventing and resolving respiratory infections. As a broad-spectrum antimicrobial, garlic can also come in handy when stomach infections come around, as well as *Strep* infections of throat and ear and *Staph* infections (including resistant strains, i.e. MRSA). Garlic also increases circulation and sweating, helping to support the body's innate fever response. It's easy to see why garlic is a favorite for winter wellness.

Fresh, Cooked or Aged? What's the Difference?

fresh garlic: powerful immune stimulant, broad-spectrum antimicrobial (acts on viruses, bacteria, fungi, protozoa, and worms), diaphoretic (increases sweating), digestive antispasmodic, increases bile flow, expectorant, insect repellent

gently cooked garlic: gently stimulates immune function (should be a regular part of winter diet); supports healthy intestinal flora and digestive health overall; supports cardiovascular health; cancer-preventive and support in cancer therapy; *aged/encapsulated garlic products have similar benefits*

When to Use Garlic

- cold and flu prevention and treatment
- viral infections (respiratory or digestive, herpes simplex)
- bacterial sinus and lung infections and congestion
- gastrointestinal infections (esp. bacterial, parasitic or fungal)
- vaginal infections
- athlete's foot & other skin infections
- moderately elevated blood pressure
- moderately elevated cholesterol
- elevated blood sugar
- prevention of tumor growth

Make it Yourself: Garlic-Ginger Oxymel

This is a favorite winter remedy that can be made and used right away and also stored for many months. Honey and vinegar add their own healing benefits. Can be used to prevent or address respiratory infection; encourages healthy fever and kills many common bacteria and viruses; also makes a good cough syrup, thinning mucus and encouraging expectoration. It's particularly nice for kids and sensitive adults because its sweetness tempers the heat of the ginger and garlic. Dose is 1 Tbsp 1-3x/day or as needed (high end for acute conditions); 1 tsp 1-3x/day for kids.

1 head garlic

4-inch piece of ginger root

2 Tbs. anise or fennel seeds

1 c. apple cider vinegar

1/2 c. local honey

Crush anise/fennel seeds in mortar and pestle; add to vinegar in a pot. Chop ginger and add to vinegar. Simmer vinegar for 30 minutes. Remove from heat and add chopped garlic and honey. If there's time, allow to sit overnight before straining or leave ingredients combined and siphon off top as needed. (Garlic may turn blue-green over time--have no fear, this is part of a normal and safe chemical reaction between the garlic and vinegar.)

General Dosing Guidelines

- Start slow (with lower doses) and work up to avoid gastrointestinal side effects (see below).
- Many clinicians recommend 1 raw clove/day for prevention of colds and flus. Up to multiple *bulbs*/day have been recommended for therapeutic benefit. Use your judgment.
- Capsule doses vary based on method of preservation (aged/freeze-dried, etc); a good brand is Garlicin—follow manufacturer's recommendations

Garlic Precautions:

- Eating garlic while nursing can sometimes cause gastric upset for infants.
- You will have garlic-breath and sweat while using garlic therapeutically!
- High doses of raw garlic or garlic tincture can sometimes cause nausea or vomiting or other gastrointestinal upset in some individuals; mixing tincture or raw cloves with milk or honey or another fat or oil-based substance can help to reduce any side effects.

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