



## Feel Good During Flu Season

by G. Bossik on August 20th, 2012 at 12:14 pm



Winter is coming, and so is the flu. If you've ever endured this virus, you know that the symptoms are memorable and unpleasant.

The body aches and chills from the flu can be particularly distressing. Sometimes, you can end up in bed for weeks, unable to do much but rest.

But what can you do to protect yourself? There are two things that you can do to safely navigate flu season:

1. Learn how the virus works.
2. Support your immune system.

### How the Flu Works

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) lists three types of flu, or influenza, viruses: A, B and C. <sup>1</sup> The government agency adds that there are also subtypes and strains of the influenza A viruses.

This year, there's a new variant of the flu — H3N2v. On April 12, 2012, the CDC reported that a child in Utah contracted the H3N2v flu virus from a pig. <sup>2</sup>

So, how does the flu work? According to scientists from the University of Southern California (USC), the flu escapes detection by the human immune system. <sup>3</sup>

"They have found that the influenza A virus has evolved by incorporating Non-structural protein 1 (NS1) into its genome to escape the RIG-I alarm system," says an article on Phys.org, a science news Web site.

The Human Virology Department, a laboratory in France, says the RIG-I alarm system is a molecular sensor that detects viruses. <sup>4</sup> So, the flu is able to circumvent this system and silently invade the body.

### Supporting Your Immune System

Thankfully, there are several ways to support your immune system during flu season. There's the CDC's recommendation — the flu shot — and there are natural substances.

One such substance is the herb, Echinacea purpurea.

In a study published in 2009, scientists found that Echinacea purpurea could deactivate several types of influenza virus. <sup>5</sup>

"Human H1N1-type IV, highly pathogenic avian IV (HPAIV) of the H5- and H7-types, as well as swine origin IV (S-OIV, H1N1), were all inactivated in cell culture assays by the EF [*Echinacea purpurea*] preparation at concentrations ranging from the recommended dose for oral consumption to several orders of magnitude lower," they concluded.

There are limitations to the study, though. It was only done using cell cultures. But, nevertheless, it shows promise as an extra means of immune system support during flu season.

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### Sources:

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4. Human Virology Department, "RIG-I alarm: a Molecular Switch to Detect Invading RNA Virus by the Cell Innate Immune System," Hvd.ens-lyon.fr.
5. Stephan Pleschka et al, "Anti-Viral Properties and Mode of Action of Standardized Echinacea purpurea Extract Against Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Virus (H5N1, H7N7) and Swine-Origin H1N1 (S-OIV)," Virology Journal.

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