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LIP THROUGH THE OLD
Farmer's Almanac and you'll see how utterly pathetic we've been in our battle against the common cold. Take this strategy employed by American colonists:

"[They] pared orange peels, rolled them up inside out, and stuffed them into the nostrils." Using rinds against the rhinovirus sounds brilliant compared with the device patented by Norman Lake in 1977—a modified clothespin. As the *Almanac* tells it, "the FDA told Lake he could not advertise his device as a cold cure but only as a way of 'keeping foreign material out of the nose.'"

Not exactly our best moments. But the '03-'04 cold season is going to be different. Our tactics? Speed and science. We've assembled the latest research on how to arm your immune system so it'll strike at the first tickle in the throat. Or immediately after a suspicious double sneeze. Or right after that vague, blah feeling begins creeping in. In the past we've always allowed the cold virus to establish a beachhead in our bodies before fighting back. This time, the second it lands, we hit and we hit hard.

STRATEGY #1: EAT THE ANTIVIRAL BREAKFAST

Woke up sick and tired? Research shows that the right morning meal can help quash the cold virus. In a recent study from the Netherlands, researchers analyzed the impact that consuming a 1,200-calorie breakfast has on a man's immune system, versus eating nothing at all. They found that eating big and eating early increased blood levels of gamma interferon, a natural antiviral agent, by 450 percent. (Going hungry actually caused a 17 percent decrease.) More research is needed to determine if fewer calories will have a similar effect, but in the meantime, shoot for 1,200 every

Out, cold:
 Beat it before it
 buries you.

Immunity Granted

You already know how to catch a cold. Now learn how to knock one out

morning until your cold symptoms disappear. Not, however, 1,200 calories of pancake syrup. Instead, hit your quota by eating a bowl of Kellogg's Raisin Bran (with 2 percent milk), a glass of orange juice, and a toasted English muffin with peanut butter and grape jelly, followed by a Stonyfield Farm-brand smoothie.

STRATEGY #2: STRESS OUT YOUR SYSTEM

If you get attacked at the office, strike back with stress. When Ohio State University researchers had 34 men either take a 12-minute memory test or watch a 12-minute video of surgical procedures, they found that the test-takers' levels of SIgA, a key immune-system protein, shot up dramatically. (The SIgA levels of the guys who saw the gore went down.) The moral of the study: Expose yourself to short-term stress, the kind you have some control over, and you'll supercharge your immune system. "Stress response is a normal protective coping mechanism," says Jos A. Bosch, Ph.D., the study author. "The body prepares itself for potential harm and activates its immune resources."

To use stress as medicine, Bosch suggests taking on a small extra project at work or helping a coworker with a task. "It shouldn't take longer than a day or half a day," he says. "If the stress response is continuous, then the immune system will be suppressed."

Already swamped? Play a video game when you get home; Bosch found that Xbox stress can also boost SIgA levels.

STRATEGY #3: BREW THE COLD-VIRUS KILLER

Swap your 3 P.M. coffee for a caffeine-toting cold buster: green tea. When Canadian researchers added green tea to lab samples of the adenovirus (one of the bugs responsible for colds), they found that it stopped the virus from replicating. All the credit goes to EGCG, a chemical compound found in certain kinds of tea, but in the highest concentrations in green tea. Start pumping green tea into your bloodstream at the first sign of a cold and you should be able to stop the advance of the adenovirus. "It's the difference between staying home for 2 or 3 days, and going to work and just sniffing a bit," says Joseph M. Weber, Ph.D., the lead study author and a professor of microbiology at the University of Sherbrooke in Quebec. The best brand to brew? Tetley; it was one of the most effective in Weber's study. Note: To brew the maximum amount of EGCG, boil a mug of water in the microwave, toss in a tea bag, and let it steep for 10 minutes. Sweeten with honey.

STRATEGY #4: RECHARGE YOUR IMMUNE RESPONSE

We love Leno, but call it a night. According to Michael Irwin, M.D., a psychiatrist and sleep researcher at UCLA, if the amount of sleep you're logging decreases by 40 percent or more (for instance, you sleep 4 hours instead of the usual 7), the effectiveness of your immune system will decline by 50 percent. And for the immune system to

We doctor the classic cold remedy

ONCE A COLD TAKES HOLD, YOU NEED TO MINIMIZE THE symptoms and shorten the duration. Chicken-noodle soup does both, and it won't knock you out the way over-the-counter cold medicines can. When researchers at Nebraska Medical Center compared chicken-noodle brands, they found that Knorr's was best at short-circuiting those nonstop sniffles. And while Knorr's is powerful right out of the packet, this quick recipe makes it even more potent.



DIRECTIONS Pour 8 cups of water into a large pot and bring to a boil. Add the chicken, carrots, onions, and garlic, and boil for half an hour or until the carrots are tender. Add the remaining ingredients and cook for an additional 5 to 10 minutes. Makes 8 1-cup servings

PER CUP 167 calories, 15 grams (g) protein, 20 g carbohydrates, 1 g fat, 2.5 g fiber, 28 milligrams sodium

- 2 c cooked, diced chicken**
(Supplies zinc; a University of Michigan study shows that the mineral can reduce the symptoms and duration of a cold.)
- ½ c chopped carrots**
(Beta-carotene in the carrots helps make immune-system cells better at fighting off infection.)
- 2 medium onions, diced, and 3 cloves garlic, minced**
(Onions and garlic are potent antivirals. "Compounds in garlic and onions are readily passed to the lungs and respiratory tract, where they can be most effective against cold viruses," says James Duke,

- Ph.D., author of 'The Green Pharmacy.)*
- 2 (2.72-oz) packets Knorr Savory Soups chicken-noodle-soup mix**
- 1 c enriched egg noodles**
(They're a good source of selenium; too little selenium makes it easier for the cold virus to multiply and mutate.)
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped**
(Peppers are packed with salicylates—the active ingredient in aspirin.)
- 2 tsp cayenne pepper**
(Supplies more salicylates, and the heat acts as a decongestant.)

operate at full strength, you'll need to sleep a straight 8, the amount shown to produce the highest levels of "natural killer cells," which attack viruses. But don't knock yourself out with alcohol, including alcohol-spiked cold medicines like NyQuil. "A single dose of alcohol impairs your sleep," says Dr. Irwin. Instead, wear light clothing—shorts and a T-shirt—during your waking hours at home; Japanese researchers found that this adjusts a person's core body temperature enough to improve sleep quality and boost the immune response.

STRATEGY #5: WORK OUT THE WHITE BLOOD CELLS

It's harder to hit a moving target, and that goes for a cold virus that's throwing punches, too. In a recent University of Massachusetts study of 547 people,

researchers found that the most physically active people had 25 percent fewer upper-respiratory infections over the course of a year than did the couch potatoes. Researchers believe that exercise may strengthen immune function, in part by increasing the body's production of white blood cells. "If you exercise, you should see two benefits: One, you'll have a reduced risk of catching a cold, and two, if you're unlucky enough to get a cold, you should have it for a shorter period of time," says Charles E. Matthews, Ph.D., the lead study author. That said, it is possible to sweat yourself sick. (Marathon runners are at a greater risk of upper-respiratory infections after a race.) So do what Matthews's study subjects did: Aim for 60 to 90 minutes of moderate activity daily, with walking counting just as much as weight training. **MH**

The Prevent Defense

THERE ARE TWO WAYS WE COMMONLY CATCH A COLD: BY unconsciously putting our mitts in our noses or mouths or by sucking in the germs from someone else's sneeze or cough. Compulsive hand washing takes care of the first avenue of infection, but what about the airborne attack? Do the obvious—hold your breath for as long as you can after someone sneezes or coughs near you, recommends Murray Grossan, M.D., an ear, nose, and throat specialist at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles and author of *The Sinus Cure*. "Think of germ-laden air as colored smoke," says Dr. Grossan. "If you hold your nose, the colored smoke won't go in."