COLD & FLU MANAGEMENT

Getting a cold or flu can mean time lost at training or competition. Taking certain precautions will reduce the risk of contracting a cold or flu, and may reduce the length of time you feel unwell.

Reduce the Risk

It’s important to do as much as you can to prevent contracting and transmitting the worst strains of the flu by getting the flu vaccine which is widely available on campus. Each year the vaccine will protect against the influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the season. By getting the vaccine not only are you reducing your own risk of contracting the flu, but also the risk to fellow teammates and family as you are less likely to transmit the illness.

General Daily Strategies

- **Wash your hands** or use hand sanitizer a lot! After practice, after weights, before you eat, when you sneeze, etc.
- **Cough into the bend in your arm, not into your hand.** This is especially important when in enclosed spaces...like public transport to UBC!
- **Stay hydrated.** Drinking fluids helps to maintain saliva flow, which in turn contains proteins with antimicrobial properties. Dehydration increases stress hormone levels that may negatively impact immune function.
- **Do not share water bottles or utensils.**
- **Eat foods containing lots of fibre.** Use high quality root vegetables, grains and fruits at meals and snacks especially when training volume or intensity is high. This will help avoid prolonged spikes in stress hormones like cortisol.
- **Prioritize sleep.** Research has shown that after 3 days of less than 7 hours sleep per night, the body’s immune defences are compromised¹. Aim for 8 – 10 hours per night.

**BUT...**

- **Limit refined sugar** at eating occasions outside of training and recovery.
- **Eat high quality and immune boosting foods.** Eat colourful fruits, leafy and root veggies, lean proteins, herbs and spices and foods high in immune boosting nutrients such as:
  - Quercetin: onions, apples, blueberries, kale, broccoli, hot peppers, tea
  - Cysteine: dairy products, meat, salmon, eggs
  - Iron: meat, fortified cereal, legumes
  - Selenium: brazil and other nuts, seafood
  - Probiotics: plain yogurt, kefir, miso, sauerkraut
  - Vitamin C: strawberries, kiwi, tomatoes, citrus, leafy greens, potatoes
  - Zinc: meat, chicken, dairy, nuts, whole grains
- **Manage your stress.** Yoga, meditation, belly breathing, talking, writing, mindfulness activities.

When Travelling

- **Hydrate and chew gum** – to maintain saliva excretion.
- **Use a nasal saline spray** – to keep nasal passages moist.
- **Wash your hands!** – or use a loonie size amount of sanitizer

If you feel a flu or cold coming on

- **Inform coaching staff** – you may pose a risk to other members of your team
- **Drink ginger tea.** Buy fresh ginger, cut off and slice about 1 tbsp. of the root. Steep in boiling water then add 1 tbsp. of raw honey and ¼ lemon. This drink is full of antioxidants, vitamin C and enzymes that are immune boosting.
- **Consider using a probiotic supplement** for the duration of your cold.
For a sore throat
• Douglas Labs Zinc Lozenges with Vitamin C. These will soothe the throat and may lessen your cold symptoms. See below for further information
• Gargle with salt water as needed

For Congestion
• Do a salt water nasal lavage if you have a sinus infection or are feeling congested.
• Do steam inhalation when coughs are your main symptom
• REST! Listen to your body - rest if you need to.

Should I take supplements?
In order to be effective and safe, supplements need to be taken in the dosages recommended, more is not better and less is usually ineffective. If using supplements, see recommendations below and seek further advice from your physician or sport dietitian.

Vitamin C
There is evidence that Vitamin C supplementation may shorten the length of a cold by 1 – 2 days and perhaps reduce the severity of symptoms.
• Directions: 1g (1000mg) per day: 250mg every 2–3 hours, 500mg 2x/day or 1 x 1000mg “time release” tablet
• Potential side effects: Too much vitamin C can lead to loose stools. If you notice this, reduce the dose.
• The impact of long term use of doses over 1,000mg of vitamin C on training adaptation is not clear so avoid using Vitamin C, so only use during illness.

Zinc
Taking zinc will not prevent you from getting the cold but if you get sick, using Zinc lozenges can reduce the duration and severity of symptoms.
• Directions: Take no more than 75-90mg per day. Aim for approximately 10 - 15mg per few hours
• Potential side effects: Take with a meal as zinc can cause nausea on an empty stomach. May interfere with copper absorption so avoid zinc supplementation unless you have a cold.

Probiotics
The World Health Organization (WHO) defines a “probiotic” as live organisms that when administered in an adequate amount provides a health benefit to the host. Probiotics have been shown to help the body restore and maintain the complex network of bacterial organisms/microbes found mostly in the digestive tract and studies have shown that some strains of probiotic can result in reduce fewer days of respiratory illness and lower severity of cold symptoms.
There are a number of different probiotics available:
• Klean Athlete*: 15 billion CFU, 8 different probiotic strains. 1 tablet per day.
• Jamieson Probiotic**: 30 Billion CFU, 8 different probiotic strains. 1 tablet per day.
• Liberte Kefir: effervescent organic - plain 2%: 10 billion CFU, 2 tablespoons per day.
• BIO K+ 40 Billion CFU per bottle, 3 different probiotic strains. ½ - 1 bottle per day.
Potential side effects: Temporary reactions such as minor bloating or minor laxative or constipating effect are signs that the beneficial bacteria are remodeling and improving the gut environment. If this occurs, take the product at night or back off and take once every 2 days.
*NSF tested probiotic supplement. **Jamieson is considered a low risk manufacturer of specific vitamins and minerals but is not NSF tested

**Please speak with your Sports Dietitian for further information**