**You’ve probably heard news stories about this year’s flu shot being less effective?**

Unfortunately the flu strains showing up around the country do not match the strains included in this year’s vaccine. Whether you usually get a flu shot, never get flu shots, have rock star immunities or are routinely miserably sick during this season, there is a great deal you can do to keep your and your family as healthy as possible. Remember our bodies have exquisite, robust immune systems and there are some easy things to do to enhance them.

6 Quick & easy ways to boost your immune system:

•**Choose hot beverages & cooked foods** vs. iced beverages & raw salads.

•**Cook with scallions, onions, garlic.** They are well known immune booster foods.

•**Keep basic, first line, Chinese herbal remedies on hand ie:**

 ***Cinnamon Twig Decoction***, aka *Gui Zhi Tang,* is perfect to take at the initial onset of cold where you have fever without sweating, chills, H/A and stiff neck. **\***

 ***Honeysuckle and Forsythia Powder***, aka *Yin Qiao San* is perfect to take at the initial onset of a cold where you have fever, thirst and sore throat. **\***

 **\***Please note the above formulas are *for first onset of cold symptoms*. If your symptoms are a mixture of the above noted ones, getting more severe and flu-like, or are lasting longer than a day or two, it is best to be examined by an acupuncturist to make appropriate recommendations.

•**Wear extra clothing covering** the neck & head especially, in windy weather.

•**Wash your hands** after contact with grocery carts, gas station pump handles, money etc.

**•Seek acupuncture** because it is proven to boost the immune system. During cold and flu season, many patients see me once per month for a relaxing “Immune Boost” acupuncture session.

Now through the end of February, with your first Immune Boost treatment, I am offering **free** homeopathic oral drops to additionally support your health. These can be used at the same time as medications or flu shots, and are safe for children too.

**When should you seek antiviral medication like Tamiflu?**

The Centers for Disease Control website states:

*CDC recommends that people at high risk check with their doctor or other health care professional promptly if they get flu symptoms. Studies show that flu antiviral drugs work best for treatment when they are started in the first 48 hours after symptoms appear. Flu symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue*.

<http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2014/p1204-flu-season.html>

**Another resource**

The Centers for Disease Control publish a weekly Influenza Surveillance Report called *FluView* <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/?s_cid=cs_074#S4>

(No, I am not making this up.) If you frequently travel, this is a valuable review tool before your expeditions to other parts of the country, overseas etc.. The site is densely packed and informative about topics such as National and Regional flu trends, what is happening in your state, Europe, what the World Health Organization has to say etc.

FYI: for Week 50, covering dates December 7 through 13, 2014, California registered low flu activity and no deaths associated with flu.

I wish you a happy and healthy 2015!