

Fight the flu season blues— boost your immune system

"Like everybody else, when I don't know what else to do, I seem to go in for catching colds."

--George Jean Nathan

It's the same old *story* every year. Just as cool weather comes knocking **on** my door, the flu comes and strikes me down. It's not just one or **two** days of tissues and tea. It's full-blown fever—coughs, chills and aches wrapped up in a punch that lasts several weeks. Add to that the wretchedness of cedar fever and I'm reduced to a walking zombie.

I needed to boost my immune system and make a change.

Take the flu shot? No way, not an option for me. At least not since I was five and underwent a terrifying series of rabies vaccinations.

Instead, I turned to **Twila Dawn Willis**, owner of **The Herb Bar** (512-444-6251). For my allergies, she recommended Celletech Ltd.'s Texas *Allergy Relief*, a homeopathic remedy that targets **cedar**, **oak** and mold "Homeopathics **are** similar to immunizations in that they introduce a minor amount of **something** to the body **so** that it **knows** what it is and doesn't overreact," she **said**. "If people start **taking** them in November, then they may have zero or diminished symptoms." Zero or diminished symptoms? Hand it over.

For flu prevention, she recommended Winter Tonic, "Two to four weeks is all you need to take. One bottle is enough for the whole family, and it includes the most current flu vaccination." For tastier alternatives, Willis offered her collection of handmade teas. **Adrenal Support** contains schisandra berries, a deep immune system toner, and **Comfort Y'ALL** contains boneset, a remedy for flu-like symptoms.

After working in the restaurant industry for twenty years, Willis purchased the business in 1995 and quickly got to work transforming it to her liking. She concentrated on **increasing** the store space by purchasing the adjacent business and also started offering hundreds of handmade products.

Willis navigates her **store** like a mad scientist in the laboratory. Ask her about any herb, flower or **berry**, and she'll immediately rattle **off** its healing powers.

When asked how she became interested in **natural** products, Willis **said**, "My grandmother was really into herbs; she grew **all** her **own** food and made all her own medicine. I was a puny kid, and I **realized** that when I **spent** time with my grandmother on her farm, I felt **better**."

Does she ever get sick? "The last time I really got sick was in January, but I was **just** way stressed out and was over-indulging in all kinds of things. I earned it, I deserved it, and I had to **go** lay **down** for five days," she said. If Lex Luther were the flu or allergies, then Willis would be Superman; and even Superman has his kryptonite days.

Consider undergoing Lymph Drainage Therapy at **Apollo Therapeutic Massage** (512-219-6717) for an added boost. Owner **Tim Oliver** said this kind of massage "aids the movement of the lymph fluid through the vessels with a wave-lake motion **on** the skin. The client simply feels a slight stretching of the skin." He emphasized the importance of maintaining a healthy lymphatic system so that it can "drain **fluids** and filter out toxins and foreign substances...thereby detoxifying the body, regenerating tissues, and maintaining a healthy immune system."

Carie Esquenazi, massage therapist at **MaximumFX Wellness Spa and Salon**, (512-472-3331) offered a steamier approach to prevention with the Allergy, Cold, and Cough Cutter treatment. As I lay face down,


Esquenazi worked with ropes as she expertly lowered a large tent over my body. With only my head visible, she was Houdini and I was, well, the victim. In pumped the steam at one hundred sixteen degrees. My body quickly responded with sweat. Lots of it. I breathed deeply, appreciating the

steam laced with eucalyptus and tangerine oils, and Esquenazi smiled as she said, "You should be in a steamy tent of happiness and love."

I stayed in my tent of happiness and love for **thirty** minutes, flipping over onto my back halfway through. It was easy to slip into my own zone as I concentrated on the tiny but numerous rivulets of sweat trickling down the sides of my body.

Esquenazi applied a sinus pressure-point massage on my face while she talked. "The heat helps to raise your body temperature. It also helps with relieving the congestion if you were to have a cold. The eucalyptus and tangerine will help to clear out your sinuses." She advised me to drink plenty of water, and I did so throughout the treatment and afterwards.

I **took** a cool shower after my steam treatment, and then settled back onto the massage table. **As** Esquenazi began my Swedish massage, she said, "The steam tent is great because it helps loosen up the muscles **on** the surface so you can access those muscles that are **deeper** more effectively."

Esquenazi **knows** exactly how to make you feel relaxed. She accomplishes this not only with the **comforting** touch of her hands, but **also** with the reassuring nature of her words. She's the kind of **person** with whom you can let your **guard** down. It worked **on** me because by halfway through my session I'd confessed that I'd never gotten a **pedicure** because I thought my feet were ugly. True to her **nature**, she responded, "For what it's worth, there's always someone else out there with **uglier** feet." I left the spa with clear sinuses, a boosted immune system and feet that were ready for their **first** @cure. 

Joanne Liu has been sneeze-free for eighteen days and counting. You may e-mail Joanne at jliu@goodlifemag.com.

