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latina life



mami's medicine cabinet

When the flu hits, you'll want to have these *remedios caseros* on hand

Every flu season, the same pattern repeats itself: You get sick. (We are, after all, less likely than non-Hispanic whites to get a flu shot.) You head to the drugstore. You drown yourself in *bi-ba-porú*—better known as Vicks VapoRub—then pop pain pills and wait what feels like an eternity for your symptoms to disappear.

This year we want to offer you a better solution: those comforting, natural cold medicines called *remedios caseros*—the same ones Mami or Abuela used to whip up when you weren't feeling well, many of which smelled bad and tasted worse. Before you turn up your nose,

hear this: Most of these concoctions are based on ancient Mayan, Aztec, and Inca traditions for the medicinal use of plants. We figure if an elixir has lasted that long, it's got to work—and in fact, "many *remedios caseros* can be as effective as over-the-counter medications," says Paula B. Castro, M.D., a holistic family practitioner with a private practice in Franktown, Colorado. Even better, adds Ellen Kamhi, Ph.D., R.N., coauthor of *The Natural Medicine Chest*, natural remedies are less likely than pharmaceutical drugs to produce an adverse reaction in your body, because they're free of the additives and preservatives found in most over-the-counter medicines.

Of course, there is no such thing as a magic pill, and *remedios caseros* do come with a downside: They take longer to kick in than traditional drug therapies. But while a conventional cold medicine may clear your sinuses within minutes, it is merely masking your symptoms; once the drug wears off, you'll be sniffing again—and need to keep popping those pills for days. *Remedios caseros*, on the other hand, work with your immune system to help defeat the cause of the illness and may result in a speedier recovery.

To help you make sure your medicine—and kitchen—cabinets are properly stocked for winter, we asked Dr. Castro and Dr. Kamhi to review four of our culture's most popular *remedios* and give us the scoop on why they work.*



Té de manzanilla con limón y miel

BEST FOR: Alleviating general cold and flu symptoms

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup water
- 1 tsp. dried chamomile flowers
- 1 tsp. honey

Lemon juice to taste

Boil water in saucepan. Remove from heat. When water is still, add chamomile; cover and steep 10 minutes. Strain; add honey and lemon juice.

WHY IT WORKS: *Manzanilla's* anti-inflammatory properties soothe mucous membranes and reduce swelling, thereby alleviating a stuffy nose. Dr. Castro says, *Manzanilla* (or chamomile, in English) is also a mild

sedative that calms the nervous tension and restlessness associated with colds and flu. It's believed to help break fevers, too, by inducing perspiration.



Jarabe de tequila

BEST FOR: Soothing a sore throat (for adults, *por supuesto*)

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 shot tequila
- 2 tbsp. raw, unpasteurized honey
- Juice of 1 lemon

Mix ingredients together and drink slowly to coat throat.

WHY IT WORKS: Honey has antiseptic properties, and lemon contains high levels of citrus bioflavonoids, which "enhance the activity of vitamin C and provide nutrients the body needs to heal inflamed tissues," Dr. Kamhi says. And the tequila? Taken in the form of three margaritas, it isn't likely to cure your *dolor de garganta*, but in this brew it will relax the throat and soothe pain, and it may help to induce restful sleep.



Brebaje de ajo

BEST FOR: Relieving congestion

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 garlic cloves
- Water

Peel and thinly slice garlic cloves. Place in large cup of water, cover, and let soak overnight. In morning, strain and drink with breakfast.

WHY IT WORKS: The Spanish settlers of Mexico and the American Southwest realized that *ajo* heals in two important ways: First, it helps clear the thick phlegm associated with a chest cold. It also has antibacterial properties that help fight infection. But don't think munching on garlic bagel chips will do the trick, says Dr. Castro. Raw, fresh garlic provides the most benefits. If you're worried about your breath, chew fresh parsley leaves—it offsets the *mal aliento*.



Té de anís

BEST FOR: Easing cough

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup water
- 1 tsp. crushed aniseed
- 1 tbsp. honey (optional)

Boil water in saucepan. Add aniseed, cover, and steep 10 minutes. Strain and sip as needed, or sweeten with honey first to soften the taste.

WHY IT WORKS: In the 16th century, Spanish colonists brought the licorice-like aniseed to the New World, where it has since been valued for its expectorant, antibacterial, and antispasmodic properties. In addition, chemicals such as creosol and alpha-pinene help loosen mucus, says Dr. Castro. Typically, drinking just 1 cup in the morning or at night will do. —Karen Grimaldos

**No home remedies, neither natural nor over-the-counter, can replace the advice of a physician. See your doctor with any questions or concerns.*

Mi mamá, la doctora

Con la llegada del otoño comienzan a aparecer los primeros síntomas de resfriados. Este año, en vez de ir corriendo a la farmacia en busca de pastillas o jarabes, te recomendamos los clásicos remedios caseros que Mamá o Abuela te obligaban a tomar.

Té de manzanilla con limón y miel. Receta: Añade una cucharadita de flores de manzanilla a una taza de agua hervida y déjala reposar 10 minutos. Cuela, y añade una cucharadita de miel y jugo de limón al gusto. Este remedio es efectivo porque la manzanilla tiene propiedades anti-inflamatorias que alivian las membranas mucosas. Además ayuda a calmar la tensión nerviosa y la intranquilidad.

Jarabe de tequila. Receta: Mezcla un trago de tequila con dos cucharadas de miel pura y el jugo de un limón. Este remedio es bueno para los dolores de garganta y es efectivo porque la miel tiene propiedades antisépticas y el limón contiene un alto nivel de bioflavonoides cítricos que aumentan la actividad de la vitamina C y proveen nutrientes necesarios para bajar la inflamación de tejidos.

Brebaje de ajo. Receta: Pela dos dientes de ajo y córtalos en rebanaditas muy finas. Ponlos dentro de una taza de agua, cúbrelos y déjala reposar hasta el día siguiente. Por la mañana, cuéla y bebe con el desayuno. Este remedio es bueno para la congestión debido a que el ajo ayuda a eliminar la flema y sus propiedades antibacteriales atacan las infecciones.

Té de anís. Receta: Hierve una taza de agua y añádele una cucharadita de anís en polvo. Déjala reposar 10 minutos. Cuela antes de beber. Si deseas, puedes endulzar esta bebida con una cucharada de miel. Este remedio es bueno para la tos, pues el anís tiene propiedades expectorantes, antibacteriales y antiespasmódicas. También contiene ingredientes que ayudan a soltar la mucosidad.