

Specialists recommend not to self-medicate and early detection of the common cold

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- It's of paramount importance to differentiate the symptoms of a common cold, the flu, and COVID-19.
- Only about 5 to 10% of respiratory diseases are caused by bacteria, which is why most of them do not require antibiotics to treat.
- Vitamins A, C, D, E, Zinc and Omegas, useful to attend the cold during the winter.

During the winter season, it's of paramount importance to be healthy in order to avoid diseases that are characteristic to this time of the year; such as Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI's), the flu, COVID-19, and in the case of children younger than 5, rotavirus diarrhea.

According to the Mexican Health Ministry, the ARI's are diseases that can affect ears, nose, throat, and lungs. Usually, people can recuperate without the need to ingest antibiotics. Nevertheless, when they are not attended in the proper manner, they can complicate into severe cases that can risk the patients' lives; especially children younger than 5, and elders over 60 years.

Information from the World Health Organization (WHO) points those respiratory infections are the worldwide main cause of death in children younger than 5, and they can be caused by viruses, bacteria or allergenic factors; being viruses most common, affecting upper respiratory tracts (nose, mouth and throat).

In Mexico, the Health Ministry, through their last Weekly Epidemiologic Report, informed that the ARI's cumulative national incidence rate in babies of less than a year, up to the epidemiologic week number 48, is of 28,882 cases; whilst in the group of 1 to 4 years, there have been 17,962 cases.

In this context, Irma Luisa Ceja Martínez, physician and Medical Manager at Grupo PiSA, explained that bacteria originated ARI's are not frequent; and only 5 to 10% of the upper respiratory tract infections are bacterial; making antibiotics a useless treatment for the common cold, given that they don't alleviate the symptoms and its consumption generates bacterial resistance which can bring negative long-term effects.

"Upper respiratory tracts have the function of maintaining heat and humidity of the air we breathe. When an individual is exposed to sudden changes in temperature, these conditions may change and our body's defenses are affected; that's why, especially during winter, it's very important to have an adequate nutrition that includes fruits, vegetables, and animal or vegetal protein," recommended Ceja, who is also the Chapter Mexico Governor of the American College of Physicians.

On her part, Karen Cecilia Picazo Huerta, Nutrition Coordinator at Bodylogic, a Grupo PiSA company, said that one of the greatest tools to enhance our immune system is the ingest of fresh, unprocessed, foods; rich in vitamins A, C, D, E, Zinc, and Omegas. In the case of children younger

than 2, breastmilk is the most powerful and effective food to maintain the young's defenses working in an appropriate manner.

“For adults, the intake of citrus such as orange, tangerine, and grapefruit are recommended; all of them easy to find during the winter. The consumption of fish and meat will also help provide the necessary nutrients for the proper functioning of our immune system. In children two years old or less, mothers are suggested to continue breastfeeding,” said the nutrition specialist who graduated from the Universidad del Valle de Atemajac (UNIVA).

To conclude, the internal medicine specialist, Ceja Martínez, suggested to pay a lot of attention to any symptom of respiratory disease. *“During the winter season, it is of paramount importance to be attentive to any symptom in the respiratory tracts, for this is a time in which COVID-19, the flu, and the common cold are coexisting; and even though they are similar, there are some symptoms that can help us differentiate them. For example, in the case of COVID-19 and the flu, fever is a shared symptom, while in the common flu is unusual. Also, the sudden loss of smell and taste is characteristic of COVID-19”.*