

SAMBUCUS: Black Elderberry Back-to-School Immune System Support for the Whole Family by Ellen Kamhi, Ph.D. R.N.



September is always an exciting month! Change is in the air. Children return to school, schedules change, and the weather also readjusts. This can put a strain on the immune system, for children as well as parents. This year, there is a particular emphasis on "fear of flu" as we all head into this season. Many parents are choosing to investigate the risk-benefit ratio of relying on new-untested flu vaccines, and would prefer to avoid vaccinations for themselves, as well as their children. In addition, even if one chooses to get vaccinated, there is no guarantee that the immune system will be supported. The BEST way to approach this challenge, is to shore up our natural immune defenses. Start with a healthy diet, filled with organic vegetables of all colors. Prepare food in advance, so there are always healthy 'grab and go' choices to take to school and work. This cuts down significantly on impulse junk food eating. Another great way to prepare is to have Sambucus or Black Elderberry, in the house for additional immune support. Sambucus nigra is the genus and species name of the Elderberry tree. This plant has a long history of use as both a food and medicine in many countries. In Old England, elder was considered a favorite tree of witches. To this day, many British still refuse to cut an Elder Tree down. In Denmark, the tree was said to house Hylde-Moer, "The Elder Tree Mother", who would haunt anyone found harming the tree. Many believed (and some still do) that an Elder Tree was a symbol of "good luck" if the tree was found growing on one's property.

The white spring flowers of the elder tree are used to produce a spring tonic drink called "elderflower cordial." The blossoms have also been used in pancakes (Palatschinken) in France instead of blueberries. The soft drink company, Fanta, prepared a soft drink from elderberry flowers called "Shokata," which was marketed in 15 countries, although not in the U.S. The berries from the Sambucus are commonly made into jams, jellies, chutneys and wine. As a medicinal, the fruit is often prepared as a syrup. Native Americans traditionally used Sambucus for infections, coughs and skin conditions. Today, Sambucus can be found listed as an "official medicine" in the Holland pharmacopeia and was listed in the past in the pharmacopeias of both England and the United States. The most common medicinal uses for Sambucus are for Cold/Flus, Sore Throats, Herpes breakouts and Swollen Glands.

Sambucus berries are rich in flavonoids including quercetin, as well as vitamins A, B and C. However, these substances alone cannot account for its remarkable effect of disarming the symptoms of a cold or flu. Science has

unlocked the secret to the mechanism of action that makes Sambucus such a powerful immune system helper. The flu is triggered by a virus, which must invade living cells in order to reproduce and spread. The virus enters the cell by puncturing the cell's outer membrane with tiny spikes known as hemagglutinin. Active constituents in Sambucus bind onto the hemagglutinin, deactivating it and ultimately preventing the piercing of the cellular membranes, which inhibits viral reproduction. Components of Sambucus also inhibit an enzyme called neuraminidase, which viruses use to attack cells and spread infection. A placebo-controlled, double-blind study showed that people who used Sambucus recovered much faster from influenza B than those who used a placebo. (http://www.dadamo.com/science_bloodgroups_influenza.htm)



Black Elderberry Tree

Another scientific study performed by Zaky-Rones and other authors was published in the Journal Of Alternative and Complimentary Medicine in 1995. The study confirmed a reduction of flu symptoms by those who used Sambucus during an outbreak of influenza. If you choose to use Sambucus for yourself and your family, carefully read labels. The best choice is Sambucus offered in a glass bottle instead of a plastic bottle. This is particularly important because Sambucus is so high in active anti-oxidants that it is more likely to pull plastic molecules off the sides of a plastic bottle than liquids which are less biologically active. In addition, read the supplement fact box to determine how many servings you are getting. Choices vary greatly from 12 to 24 servings per 4 ounce bottle. Check to see how much each dose requires; some products suggest two teaspoons, while more concentrated products suggest one teaspoon. In addition, see if there are any added preservatives or sweeteners. The Sambucus should have a deep natural berry taste that most people (including children) enjoy, and has an excellent safety record. There are no known adverse reactions, although the possibility of an individual allergic reaction can never be discounted.

Ellen Kamhi PhD RN, The Natural Nurse®, can be heard on radio daily. She is the author of several books, including WEIGHT LOSS, the Alternative Medicine Definitive Guide. Dr. Kamhi has been involved in natural health care for over 4 decades. She answers consumer questions at www.naturesanswer.com and has a private practice on Long Island. For more info, visit www.naturalnurse.com or call 800-829-0918.

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