

Are the rising swine flu casualties giving you jitters? Not sure how you can avoid falling prey to the growing epidemic? First and foremost, there is absolutely no need to panic.

Watching television to keep tabs on the progress of H1N1, particularly in the badly affected areas like Pune, is all right. But don't let the hysterical anchors get under your skin and start wearing a mask each time you step out of the house, unless you are visiting a very crowded area. Then too, the mask will protect you only for a specified period.

Without giving in to the swine flu panic and creating a stockpile of Tamiflu and N-95 masks at home and enriching pharma companies, there are a number of other measures you can take to ensure that the virus is not able to get you, irrespective of which part of the world you are in.

It is essential to remember that all kinds of viruses and bacteria can attack you when your immune system is weak, or they can weaken it easily. Hence, building your own defences would be a better, more practical, long-lasting and much more economical idea.

Here are some easy steps you can take to tackle a flu virus of any kind, including swine flu. It is not necessary to follow all the steps at once. You can pick and choose a combination of remedies that suit you best. However, if you are already suffering from flu, these measures can help only up to an extent. And, if you have been infected by H1N1, visiting a hospital and staying in solitary confinement is a must.

1. Have five duly washed leaves of *Tulsi* (known as Basil in English; medicinal name *Ocimum sanctum*) everyday in the morning. *Tulsi* has a large number of therapeutic properties. It keeps throat and lungs clear and helps in infections by way of strengthening your immunity.

2. *Giloi* (medicinal name *Tinospora cordifolia*) is a commonly available plant in many areas. Take a one-foot long branch of *giloi*, add five to six leaves of *Tulsi* and boil in water for 15-20 minutes or long enough to allow the water to extract its properties. Add black pepper and *sendha* (salt used during religious fasts), rock or black salt, or *Misri* (crystallised sugar like lumps to make it sweet) according to taste. Let it cool a bit and drink this *kadha* (concoction) while still warm. It will work wonders for your immunity. If *giloi* plant is not available, get processed *giloi* powder from Hamdard or others, and concoct a similar drink once a day.

3. A small piece of camphor (*kapoor*) approximately the size of a tablet should be taken once or twice a month. It can be swallowed with water by adults while children can take it along with mashed potatoes or banana because they will find it difficult to have it without any aides. Please remember camphor is not to be taken everyday, but only once each season, or once a month.

4. Those who can take garlic, must have two pods of raw garlic first thing in the morning. To be swallowed daily with lukewarm water. Garlic too strengthens immunity like the earlier measures mentioned.

5. Those not allergic to milk, must take a glass of hot or lukewarm milk every night with a small measure of *haldi* (turmeric).

6. Aloe vera (*gwarpatha*) too is a commonly available plant. Its thick and long, cactus-like leaves have an odourless gel. A teaspoon gel taken with water daily can work wonders for not only your skin and joint pains, but also boost immunity.

7. Take homeopathic medicines — **Pyrogenium 200 and Inflenzium 200 in particular — five tablets three times a day, or two-three drops three times a day. While these are not specifically targeted at H1N1 either, these work well as preventive against common flu virus.**

8. Do Pranayam daily (preferably under guidance if you are already not initiated into it) and go for morning jog/walk regularly to keep your throat and lungs in good condition and body in fine fettle. Even in small measures, it will work wonders for your body's resistance against all such diseases which attack the nose, throat and lungs, besides keeping you fit.

9. Have citrus fruits, particularly Vitamin C rich *Amla* (Indian gooseberry) juice. Since fresh *Amla* is not yet available in the market (not for another three to four months), it is not a bad idea to buy packaged *Amla* juice which is commonly available nowadays.

10. Last but not the least, wash your hands frequently every day with soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds; especially before meals, or each time after touching a surface that you suspect could be contaminated with flu virus such as a door handle or a knob/handle, especially if you have returned from a public place or used public transport. Alcohol-based hand cleaners should be kept handy at all times and used until you can get soap and warm water.
