

# Mind-Body Help



With the onset of the winter cold and flu season, it's a good time to take new stock of the mind-body methods effective against these pernicious health nuisances.\*

Why body *and* mind? Because yogis as well as holistic doctors concur that life energy—the true cause of health and vitality—responds to physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual conditions. By applying this all-round approach, one is best equipped to prevent—or quickly recover from—the common cold.

Remember, as Paramahansa Yogananda said, “So long as balanced vitality is maintained by right living, proper diet, and *pranayama* meditation (life-energy control techniques), the body's own life energy ‘electrocutes’ disease before it can develop.” His books and *Lessons* contain many pointers for strengthening and directing the healing life force (including his unique Energization Exercises). Here are a few that are especially relevant to the cold season. (Be sure to get a doctor's help if your condition warrants it.)

\*For our readers in the Southern Hemisphere, for whom summer is just beginning, we will post this article on our Web site so you can read it before “winter” comes next June!

## *Cleanse the Body of Toxins*

Overeating and wrong eating make the body susceptible to illness, by producing an over-accumulation of toxins. The life force is weakened, and it is easier for viruses and bacteria to break through the body's defenses. When toxins work on the mucous membranes in the nose and throat, we are particularly vulnerable to catching colds.

Therefore, it is a good idea to begin watching your diet more carefully at the beginning of the “cold season,” exercising self-control in both the quantity and the quality of what you eat. This is the most important physical rule in preventing colds.

Reduce your intake of unhealthy foods (such as meat, refined flour and sugar). Increase your consumption of vitamin-rich fresh fruits and vegetables—especially citrus fruits, which provide Vitamin C and also are efficient detoxifiers.

## *Use Fasting to Prevent and Cure Colds*

“At least once every month you should give a thorough house-

cleaning to your body by fasting,” the Guru said. “Do not let poison accumulate in your system. When you suddenly become sick you hasten to pray to God for healing. Don't let yourself get sick. The greatest way to maintain health, and the simplest, is to fast on orange juice one day every week and for two or three days consecutively once a month.”

Fasting with citrus juices is ex-



cellent for prevention of colds, but not during a cold, as they tend to produce mucus. To rid yourself of a cold, it is better to fast on other unsweetened fruit juice. Fresh,

ripe, non-citrus fruits and ground raw almonds (unsalted) may also be taken during the fast.

“There is nothing that kills a cold as quickly as fasting,” said Paramahansaji. “If you can fast twenty-four hours, the cold usually goes away.” Regular elimination is important. Take a natural laxative during the fast if necessary.

## *Get Daily Exercise*

Exercising regularly also helps the body resist colds and other infections. Those whose health per-

“...and he rebuked the fever...”

Medical doctors identify certain viruses as the cause of the common cold; and their advice about preventing contagion is valuable (for example, frequent handwashing when exposure to colds is likely, and use of various medicinal substances to combat colds). Viruses, scientists say, are little more than microscopic bits of genetic material (DNA) encased in protein; spiritual healers, however, address the destructive “information” or intelligence vibrating through that rudimentary organism. In this way, such diseases can be countered by consciously applied mental and spiritual therapies such as affirmation, positive thinking, faith, and will power.

In *The Second Coming of Christ: The Resurrection of the Christ Within You*, Paramahansa Yogananda describes how Jesus employed this knowledge for healing:

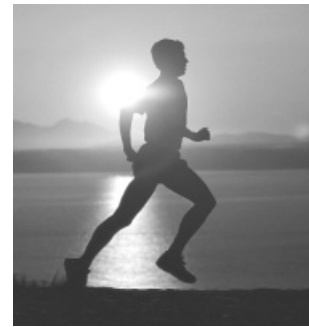
*“And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them (Luke 4:38–39).”*

“Diseases are due to the lack of proper operation of the conscious beneficial forces that govern the body, and are also due to the evil forces which consciously allow the bane of disease to spread in the body. Some diseases are brought about by physical transgressions against the laws of health, but the disease germs themselves are engendered and intelligently controlled by the evil force of Satan, which tries to destroy the beautiful creation of God—the human body....

“Disease germs have a dormant intelligence that at an opportune time is roused and directed by Satan. Jesus could see the evil force that was responsible for the introduction of fever into the body of Simon’s wife’s mother, and thus he rebuked it away and restored the harmony of health. Jesus commanded the predominating evil force to depart from the body of the stricken woman, thus reinstating the conscious astral forces that govern normal health. He knew all the intelligent evil forces that create havoc in people and was able, through his all-powerful Christ Consciousness, to talk in the vibratory language of the fever and command it to depart from the ailing body of the woman. That is what is meant by Jesus ‘rebuking the fever.’”

mits should walk, jog, or take some other form of exercise every day until perspiration breaks out over the whole body. This not only eliminates harmful poisons through the pores of the skin, but raises the body temperature enough to destroy harmful bacteria, in the same way a fever does for a sick person.

“Research shows that sedentary people don’t have as vigorous an



immune system as those who exercise,” the *UC Berkeley Wellness Letter* reports. “Moderate exercise (for example, a

moderate walking program undertaken by previously sedentary people) seems to improve immune function.”

According to The American Council on Exercise, “A survey conducted during the ’80s revealed that 61 percent of 700 recreational runners reported fewer colds since they began running, while only 4 percent felt they had experienced more. Research has shown that during moderate exercise, several positive changes occur in the immune system. Various immune cells cir-

culate through the body more quickly, and are better able to kill bacteria and viruses. Once the moderate exercise bout is over, the immune system returns to normal within a few hours. In other words, every time you go for a brisk walk, your immune system receives a boost that should increase your chances of fighting off cold viruses over the long term.”

### ***Sunshine to Strengthen the Body’s Life Force***

Daily sunbaths for ten to thirty minutes—depending on the intensity of the sun and sensitivity of the skin—help to keep the body charged with vital energy, and thus help protect against colds. (Take care to avoid harmful overexposure or sunburn.)

According to British researcher and *Sunday Times* health columnist Susan Clark: “Sunlight triggers the body to make its own Vitamin D, which is crucial not only for strong bones and healthy teeth, but for keeping the immune system healthy too. Studies have shown, for example, that exposing the body to sunlight or even ultraviolet light from an artificial source increases the number of white blood cells or lymphocytes. These are the body’s primary defence

against the onslaught of an infection and are an important part of your immune response to the organisms that cause illness.”

“Ordinary sunbaths are partially effective,” Paramahansa Yogananda said, “but much is yet to be learned about harnessing sunlight to life force for therapeutic purposes.” In the *Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons*, he outlines methods that are “intended to quicken the life force by combining it with the sun’s rays, creating a great force for the healing of different body parts.” For colds, he gives the following technique:

“Lie flat on your back on a wool blanket in the sunlight. Expose the chest, thighs, and feet. Open your mouth wide and lift your chin so sunlight can enter your mouth and nostrils. While doing this, vibrate your head slightly by tensing it gently, concentrating upon the mucous membranes of the nose and throat. Think of the energy you are sending by your vibration as absorbing and transmuting the sunlight into a warm healing force. Visualize this force as passing through the nasal and throat passages, lined with mucous membrane, and burning away disease germs. Practice for

ten to fifteen minutes, alternately tensing the head, gently vibrating it, for about five seconds, and then relaxing for about a minute.”

### *Saltwater Hygiene for Throat and Sinuses*

Yogis teach that gargling daily with mild salt water warmed to body temperature is a very good preventative for colds. The flow of salt water, they say, not only cleanses away unhealthy dirt, pollutants, and microbe-harboring mucus from the throat and nasal membranes, but enhances the flow of *prana* to these regions and aids

in keeping the mucous membranes toned and healthy.

“Clearing the throat and nose with a mixture of half a teaspoonful of salt in a glass of tepid water early in the morning, at noon, and just before going to bed, has been found quite beneficial,” says Paramahansa Yogananda in the *SRF Lessons*. Many health practitioners find that non-iodized salt and purified (non-chlorinated) water works best.

A number of health researchers have documented the benefits of using this saltwater mixture. Medical studies have found that many

## “The better your meditation, the healthier your immune system”

Reporting on a study led by Richard Davidson, director of the laboratory for affective neuroscience at the University of Wisconsin, and Jon Kabat-Zinn, founding director of the Stress Reduction Clinic and Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, the *Los Angeles Times* (May 5, 2003) reported:

“The researchers sought to test a particular theory: that in people who are stressed, anxious, or depressed, the right frontal cortex of the brain is often overactive and the left frontal cortex relatively underactive. Many such people also show heightened activation of the amygdala, a key brain center for processing fear.

“By contrast, people who are usually calm and happy typically show greater activity in the left frontal cortex, relative to the right. These folks also pump out less of the stress hormone cortisol, recover faster from negative events, and have higher levels of natural killer

cells, a type of white blood cell that battles infection and is a measure of immune system function.

“Each person, notes Davidson, tends to have a natural ‘set point,’ a base-line frontal cortex activity level that is characteristically tipped left or right and around which daily fluctuations of mood swirl. What meditation may do, the researchers reasoned, is nudge this balance in a favorable direction.”

*Time Magazine*, July 27, 2003, said: “In [the] study conducted with Wisconsin’s Richard Davidson, Kabat-Zinn gave a group of newly taught meditators and nonmeditators flu shots and measured the antibody levels in their blood. Researchers also measured their brain activity to see how much the meditators’ mental activity shifted from the right brain to the left. Not only did the meditators have more antibodies at both four weeks and eight weeks after the shots, but the people whose activity shifted the most had even more antibodies. The better your meditation technique, Kabat-Zinn suggests, the healthier your immune system.”



individuals—especially those who are chronically susceptible to colds or other sinus conditions—also benefit from the practice of *neti*, the ancient yogic nasal wash. This practice consists of gently irrigating the nasal passages with the warm saltwater mixture. For this traditional form of yogic cleansing, yogis often employ a small water vessel with a spout (sometimes called a “*neti* pot”); these can be found at many health food stores, with accompanying instructions.

### ***Affirm Inner Happiness and Positive Thoughts***



Paramahansa Yogananda said: “Cheerfulness is very important to health. It is the best antiseptic you can have—plus the thought that you are all right.”

In addition to the many valuable suggestions given by Paramahansa for inner joy and good cheer, a mind-body tip especially relevant to the winter season is provided by research on light and mood: Get out in the sunshine each day!

Sunlight is known to stimulate the brain’s production of ser-

tonin, a neurotransmitter associated with feelings of happiness and contentment. With the shorter days of winter—especially severe in higher latitudes—many persons suffer from increased tendency toward depression (the so-called “winter blues” or “seasonal affective disorder”) as a result of not getting enough light exposure on their bodies. Spending most of the day indoors, many people don’t even take advantage of what little sunlight is available at this time of year.

No matter where you live or what the season, you can visualize God’s healing light flowing over your body, mind, and soul, and affirm in deep concentrated meditation:

I am submerged in eternal light.  
It permeates every particle of my being. I am living in that light.  
The Divine Spirit fills me within and without.

### ***A Final Mind-Body Tip for the Season: Get in the Christmas Spirit!***

Paramahansa Yogananda wrote: “Christmas festivity evokes the sentiment of the peace of this di-

vine soul who came into the world to serve as a beacon of light to guide stray hearts. There is also the spirit of joy that abounds in traditional Christmas observances. ...And there is an essence of love in the elements of sacrifice and friendship experienced in the giving of gifts....

“The remembrance of the exemplary divine goodness of Jesus that was manifested in all he did, the thought of the Divine Love he gave, and that in that Love he lived and died to uplift the world—that is the spirit that is predominant at Christmastime.”

Could exposure to the spirit of selfless love have any effect on preventing colds? Surprisingly, yes, according to a study by psychologist David McLelland at Harvard

University. He showed a film about Mother Teresa of Calcutta—who spent her life serving the sick and dying—to students and then measured the effect on their bodies’ immune system. His finding? Even the students who were personally critical of the saintly nun showed a marked elevation in immune function. *American Health* magazine (July/August 1985) reported: “The students’ conscious judgment of Teresa did not keep many of them from experiencing specific benefits at watching her selfless love: The movie stimulated a sharp increase in the Immunoglobulin-A content of student saliva. IgA kills many a virus. It’s the immune system’s first line of defense against upper respiratory infection.” □



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