Herbal Self-Help for Herpes

Nothing like the stress of back to school or work to make those irritating lip blisters pop up. But for the estimated 50 per cent of North Americans who suffer from the herpes simplex virus, the Prunella vulgaris (self-heal) plant offers promising help.

Chinese medical experts have used self-heal, a member of the mint family, for centuries to treat oral sores. Similarly, Europeans have traditionally used the herb to combat throat and mouth problems.

Now research by Drs. Spencer Lee and Song Lee of Dalhousie University in Halifax has revealed that self-heal inhibits the herpes virus. When isolated, one of the plant's active compounds, PVP-E, halted replication of both herpes simplex types I and II in cultured tissue cells pre-infected with the virus. The doctors also tested the extract on cells prior to exposure to the virus and were pleased to discover that PVP-E had no toxic effects but, in fact, protected the healthy cells from infection.

Be a tea-totaller:
Green Tea Fights Colon Cancer

A new study by the Linus Pauling Institute at Oregon State University shows moderate amounts of green and white tea may be just as effective against colon cancer as a commonly prescribed drug. Published in the journal Carcinogenesis (March 2003), the study found that green tea reduced the number of tumours in mice from an average of 30 to 17, and white tea from 30 to 13. The most effective treatment was a combination of the drug Sulindac and white tea, which reduced tumours from 30 to six. The teas' protective effect is thought to be due to their high levels of antioxidant polyphenols, called catechins. Researchers recommend drinking at least three coffee-sized mugs of tea per day—the more the better.

Linus Pauling Institute, http://lpi.oregonstate.edu

What is white tea?

White tea is one of the most highly prized teas in the world—and the least processed. Originating in China but also grown in India, white tea is produced from specially harvested tea leaves or buds that are quickly steamed to prevent oxidation. This gentle process allows white tea to retain the highest possible amount of polyphenols.

Creatine Increases Strength, Endurance

It's a popular supplement for those who want to increase strength and endurance in sport performance. And two studies in the Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research find creatine can do just that, with no injury to muscles or effects on mood.

In a study by the US Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine (November 2002), one group of soldiers was given up to 24 grams of creatine in sports bars, and others received a placebo. Those who took creatine experienced a 14-per cent increase in bench press repetitions, a 1.4-kilogram increase in body mass and a 0.5-per cent decrease in percentage of body fat. No difference was noted in obstacle course performance or in mood.

Another study (March 2003) by the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia, and the US Ski and Snowboard Association was conducted in response to anecdotal reports that creatine may increase incidence of muscle strains and tears. But study results debunked the anecdotes: participants had significant muscle mass increase and improved performance in jumping exercises, but no increase in stiffness or injury.

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