Garlic and respiratory infections
Paul Bergner

With H1N1 influenza circulating, herbalists are naturally asking what are our best remedies for preventing or treating respiratory infections. This trial reminds us not to forget garlic (*Allium sativum*). Capsules of Allicor brand garlic preparation equivalent to 300 mg day of dry garlic powder were administered in a double blind placebo-controlled trial for five months to 42 children (41 placebo) aged 10-12 years old. At the end of the study, the treated children had 70% fewer respiratory infections. An index of overall health showed the treated children scored 50% higher (Andrianova et al.)

An earlier trial also showed effectiveness at prevention of respiratory infections. An allicin-containing garlic capsule was given to volunteers for a 12 week period between November and February at the height of cold and flu season. Compared to placebo the garlic group had a highly significant 63% fewer respiratory infections, with a 70% shorter duration of symptoms (Josling).

Garlic may act to prevent viral infections by increasing the number and or activity of T-killer cells, a primary defense against virus-infected cells (Abdullah et al; Ishikawa et al) and may also promote the lymphocytes and antigen-presenting cells of the specific immune system (Lau et al).


Licorice in pregnancy
Paul Bergner

A group of researchers in Finland have measured apparent adverse effects of licorice consumed during pregnancy on the cognitive and mental status of children after birth (Räikkönen et al). The effects on children at 8.1 years appeared to be dose related in a group born to mothers who consumed 500mg or more per week during pregnancy. The proposed mechanism is through enhanced effects of cortisol on the fetus, which is normally protected from the higher cortisol levels in the maternal blood. Licorice inhibits the enzyme that protects the fetus.

Another possible reason to avoid licorice in pregnancy is its potential effect to lower testosterone in a male fetus. The male fetus requires large amounts of testosterone in order for sexual differentiation. Several trials have shown that licorice can inhibit testosterone significantly in males (Armanini et al 2003) and females (Armanini et al 2004). Other researchers, however, have failed to reproduce the result (Sigurjonsdottir et al; Josephs et al).


