

The Spinal Column

By Darren L. Snodgrass, D.C.

COLD & FLU SEASON

Is Here: Should I Try ECHINACEA?

Echinacea (also referred to as Echinacea purpurea or Echinacea angustifolia) is an herb that is native to North America. You may have seen this vibrant flowering plant growing freely in fields, on the plains, or in your neighbor's garden. Echinacea offers more than just visual appeal. It has been used for thousands of years to support the health of the immune system.

Many people have recognized the health benefits of Echinacea, perhaps that's why there are thousands of Echinacea products on the market. Since they all contain Echinacea, they must all work the same, right? Wrong. When it comes to quality, you get what you pay for. Look at the label.

Echinacea angustifolia was the main species used traditionally. Recent research has shown that Echinacea angustifolia has unique compounds that make it more effective than Echinacea purpurea. This same research also shows a blend of both species is as effective as or more effective than Echinacea angustifolia used alone.

The most potent part of the Echinacea plant is the root, so only this should be used in making Echinacea supplements. Most Echinacea products are ineffective because they don't contain the root or the alkylamides (pronounced al-kyl-a-mydes) found in the root. Alkylamides are what makes Echinacea effective in supporting the immune system. The process in which the product is prepared is of vital importance in retaining these delicate compounds, which can be easily damaged or lost.

Traditionally, the quality of the root was determined by chewing a small amount. The greater the tingling sensation, the better the quality was considered to be. Alkylamides cause this tingling sensation. If you are currently taking an Echinacea product, nibble on a tablet just a little and see if your mouth tingles. If it does not you most likely have purchased a less than desirable Echinacea product.

A strong immune system is essential, so everyone can benefit from taking Echinacea. Our immune systems are bombarded daily with a large number of microscopic invaders. Additionally, the stress of our hectic lifestyles weaken the immune system, leaving it susceptible to damage and ultimately poor health. You can help your immune system ward off these invaders by taking Echinacea every day. It has been shown to support your health during winter and improve the way your immune system works.

The Echinacea products that I provide have been clinically shown to be effective in supporting the immune system. It contains a unique blend of Echinacea purpurea (675 mg) with 4.1 mg of alkylamides per tablet. Echinacea may help you to:

- Enhance immune system function
- Support and promote healthy white blood cells, which are responsible for attacking invaders
- Encourage healthy upper respiratory tissue
- Support and maintain healthy throat tissue
- Stimulate the body's normal tissue support and renewal function

Talk to your health care professional today about using Echinacea. They will also be able to inform you of any cautions that you should be aware of when taking this herb.



Dr. Darren Snodgrass

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Retire Smart

By Humberto Cruz

The 'Seven Deadly Sins of Retirement'

When we began writing "Retire Smart" in 2001, our central theme was that retirement was being radically redefined. A new, more inspiring definition is taking hold now, but many retirees hurt themselves by clinging to the old script.

Rather than a time of uninterrupted and perhaps aimless leisure, retirement is increasingly perceived - and marketed - as a time for new beginnings. Advertisers chasing the lucrative baby boomer market aggressively promote retirement as a time for "rediscovery" and "self-actualization," an opportunity to indulge our passions and follow our dreams.

Without any commercial intent, we've long agreed with that definition. But we still see many people living the old notion of retirement as a time to merely exist until we die.

Our evidence is purely anecdotal but no less real. From our observations, we've come up with "Seven Deadly Sins of Retirement." Avoid these behaviors if you want to live out the new definition of retirement:

1. Thinking (and saying) things such as "I am too old to (fill in the blank)." Aside from being demonstrably false in most cases, such defeatist attitude keeps us from enjoying new experiences.

Admittedly, we may be too old to jog a mile as fast as we once did, but most of us can at least walk. We are never too old to learn how to use a computer or play a musical instrument or speak a new language. Nobody is grading us, so we can learn and do at our own pace.

2. Constantly talking about our ailments - In response to "How are you doing," nobody except perhaps your doctor wants to hear a spiel of everything that ails you, from aching joints and a bad back to having trouble sleeping. Even a shorter response such as "I am OK, but," puts too much emphasis on the "but."

We are not saying to ignore health issues or not discuss them when appropriate. But if you put your mind on other things - perhaps helping others? - you may even forget about your aches and pains.

3. Finding excuses to postpone doing something. We can always find reasons to procrastinate (we'll do it when we have more time, feel better, or after we do something else). But unless you clearly cannot afford to do something now (for example, your dream is an expensive trip and you don't have the money), give yourself permission and do it before it is too late.

4. Holding grudges. We've seen members of families and people who were once close friends avoid one another for years, barely exchanging a glance or word even when forced to seat at the same table at a family or social gathering.

Speaking of gatherings, the new year offers the perfect opportunity to reach out and mend fences. To those who hold grudges, can you even remember why? If it's time to make peace and tell somebody you really love him or her, how long are you going to wait?

5. Becoming intransigent. The older we get, the more strongly some of us cling to our values and beliefs (including political and religious). There is nothing wrong with that, except when we become intolerant and refuse to consider other people's opinions.

6. Feeling (and projecting) a false sense of entitlement. Living longer can reward us with renewed perspective and wisdom, provided we learn from our experiences. But living longer per se should not grant us any special privileges, or excuse our being rude.

7. Engaging in homeowners' association wars. Our mailbox regularly fills with lengthy letters and "communiques" from groups with opposing views on neighborhood management and maintenance issues; the debate is so contentious that some neighbors no longer visit with others. We applaud those who become involved for the betterment of the neighborhood but find the ill will and attacks unfortunate and totally unnecessary.

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