

Embargoed until 00:01am

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It's official: Survey shows 'Man Flu' doesn't exist!

– But perhaps WOmAn flu does? –

British women will be left reeling at new research* that casts doubt on the very existence of 'man flu' – the notion that men exaggerate ordinary winter snuffles to get the sympathy vote. In fact, the survey shows women to be the biggest winter whingers, not men, with most admitting to embellishing their cold and flu symptoms just for a bit of attention or for a day off work!

It seems that women fare worst on most counts; nearly all women (91%) claim to feel "bad or very bad" in comparison to only two thirds of men; women go even further by confessing to feeling over-emotional and weak when they have a cold.

However, with regards to prevention and cold/flu management, women take the lead on supporting their body's defences. Women are more proactive and twice as likely (31% vs 17%) to take matters into their own hands by eating the right things and self diagnosing. Men on the other hand, are more likely to visit the doctor to seek advice on how to best manage their symptoms (74% vs 70%).

Professor John Oxford, cold and flu expert at The Royal London Hospital, said: 'the best way to prevent either 'man' or 'woman' flu is probably to sleep in a separate bedroom to a suffering partner. This close proximity is a sure way to spread the virus, much more so than a person just coughing or sneezing on a train – in this setting, holding an infected handrail is a more likely method of transmitting the virus.'

From a nutritional standpoint, there are things you can do to help to stave off colds and flu. Leading nutritionist Fiona Hunter commented: "People need to take extra care in winter. A good healthy diet is essential to help lower your chances of catching colds and flu. The evidence is increasing for consumption of food and nutrients such as: zinc and vitamin C

and food like: garlic and probiotic drinking yogurts (such as Actimel). These can help strengthen the body's defences and in turn make it easier to deal with viruses.”

Additional findings showed that both men and women, almost equally, admit to being unproductive (46% vs 44%) and incapable of doing anything well (36% vs. 33%) when suffering with a cold, with their combined sick days costing the UK economy approximately £13.2 billion**

Gladeana McMahon, consultant psychotherapist and one of the experts assessing what contributes to winter wellness, said: “Women tend to talk more about their feelings generally, but men it seems, appear to vocalise more when they're sick – that's where the myth around man flu originated. So it's surprising that these results show women to be the biggest complainers when it comes to colds and flu. Maybe it is more a case of needing more recognition for what they do and if they can't get that on a day to day basis then looking for a bit of sympathy when they're sick, is a way of making up for this”.

- Ends -

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About probiotics

To maximise the benefits of probiotic use, the following advice can be given:

- Probiotics can be taken when the body's natural defences are challenged by factors such as infantile diarrhoea, stress, when antibiotics are prescribed and in particular for elderly people and children from the age of 3 upwards
- In order to achieve optimum digestive conditions, probiotics should ideally be taken with food as this can help to aid their passage to the colon

About Actimel

Actimel® is a probiotic drinking yogurt that contains unique L. casei Imunitass® cultures and is scientifically proven to help support the body's defences. Actimel® contains over 10 billion live probiotic bacteria per bottle which remain active throughout its shelf life. Actimel® is available in many flavours and two ranges - standard (1.6% fat) and 0.1 % fat.

References

* **Opinion Matters/Tick Box Survey 'winter wellness'. UK, September 2008**

** **CBI / AXA Absence Survey 2008**