

Optimise your Immune System

Our immune system is made up of a network of cells, organs and fluids that help defend us against the millions of bacteria, viruses, and fungi that bombard us in our daily lives. Supporting our immune system is a powerful way of 'arming ourselves' against the immune challenges we face, reducing the risk of infection as well as shortening the duration of colds and flu.

Five star foods to turn to in the battle against bugs:

1. Garlic
2. Ginger
3. Fermented foods
4. Elderberry
5. Mushrooms



Garlic is fantastic for tackling infections of all sorts. It has antibacterial, anti-viral and anti-fungal properties. Consume it raw for greatest benefit. Add chopped raw garlic to a salad dressing and stir it in raw at the end of cooking. If feeling brave, swallow a chopped peeled clove of garlic before bed to avoid infection.



Ginger is anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory. Try juicing a thumb-sized piece of fresh ginger with vitamin C rich carrots and orange. Or simply grate it into warm water with the juice of half a lemon. Add it to home cooked soups, stir-fries or curries.

Elderberry contains phytochemicals which blunt the 'spikes' on the outside of viruses, preventing them from entering cells and replicating. Elderberry strengthens our immune response against the influenza virus, increasing the speed of recovery.



Reishi and shitake mushrooms contain beta glucans, derived from yeast cell walls, and are proven to support the immune system, making it more resistant to pathogens. They are particularly supportive against upper respiratory tract infections and colds.



Increasing our intake of **fermented foods** is very worthwhile. Each mouthful provides trillions of beneficial bacteria. Allowing these good bacteria to flourish creates a powerful ally for our immune system, 80% of which lives in our gut. Fermented foods include kimchi, sauerkraut, kombucha, kefir and miso paste.

Specific Nutrients

Nutrient deficiency is a common cause of a depressed immune system. Make sure you have optimal levels of vitamin A, D, C and zinc which are all involved in white blood cell production, immune cell differentiation and antioxidant activity.

Vitamin A: supports the integrity and barrier defence of our mucous membranes. Eat fish, eggs and plain natural full fat yoghurt (must be full fat).

Vitamin C: at high doses may decrease duration of cold symptoms. It inhibits virus multiplication and improves immune cell function. Kiwi, peppers and broccoli are good sources.

Vitamin D: deficient levels may result in inappropriate immune responses. Consult a registered nutritional therapist to have your levels tested and supplement accordingly. Trace amounts found in oily fish, organic eggs and mushrooms.

Zinc has anti-viral properties. It has shown to support immunity in childhood irrespective of immune status, reduce duration of cold and flu and may reduce risk of respiratory infection in the elderly. Prawns, lamb, sesame and pumpkin seeds are good sources. Consider supplementing during a cold or flu.

The best approach to supporting immune function is a comprehensive plan involving lifestyle, stress management, exercise, diet, nutritional supplementation and the use of botanicals.

General lifestyle practices associated with greater immunity:

- Increased intake of vegetables
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Get 7-8 hours sleep per night
- Exercise regularly
- A diet low in sugar (sugar suppresses immunity and inhibits white blood cells)
- Adequate but not excessive protein
- Optimal stomach acid levels
- Low alcohol intake. Alcohol suppresses the immune system.
- Laughter has shown to support the immune response while stress suppresses it.

Get in Touch:

If you feel you could benefit from one-to-one support check out the number of different ways we can work together here:

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