

Boost Your Immune System and Stay Well

Our bodies are created with a remarkable immune system that does a great job at defending us against disease-causing microorganisms. But, occasionally a germ invades this system and makes us ill. According to Rice University, this year's flu vaccine will have only a 20 percent efficiency. So how do we boost our immune system and stay well?

Choose Cardio

According to the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, people who exercise five or more times a week are 43 percent less likely to get sick than those who exercise once a week. During aerobic exercise, your immune cells move around more throughout the body and bloodstream. As a result, they're able to better detect and destroy invading pathogens.

Get a Little Extra Sleep

Aric Prather, Ph.D. discovered in a recent study that after subjects were exposed to a live cold virus, 39 percent of people who had slept six hours or less got sick, compared with just 18 percent of those who had slept more than six hours. In fact, sleep loss has been associated with diminished function of the immune cells that help you fight off viruses.

Fill Up On Anticold Nutrients

Fiber isn't just food you, it's an energy source for gut bacteria. When gut bacteria ferments fiber, metabolites are produced that help the immune system attack the flu virus. Soluble fiber that attracts water and slows digestion seems to deliver more immune benefits than the insoluble kind. Aim for 25 grams of fiber per day with a quarter of it being soluble fiber. For an additional immune boost, try adding garlic (it is shown to possess virus fighting and bacterial killing properties) and ginger (it is a natural anti-inflammatory) to your meals on a regular basis.



Gargle After Every Meal

The *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* reports if you gargle with plain water for 15 seconds three times a day, you can reduce your odds of catching a cold by nearly 40 percent. Gargling physically removes the enzymes in the mouth and throat that help viral cells replicate. Viral cells are ingested when someone around you coughs or sneezes near you and you breathe in the infected droplets. According to Live Science, about 3,000 droplets are expelled in a single cough with some flying out of the mouth at speeds up to 50 miles per hour. Sneezing is even worse, with as many as 40,000 droplets expelled at speeds greater than 200 miles per hour.

Adjust Your Attitude

Besides making you happy, a positive outlook may also help you stay healthy. Research has found that people who were optimistic had higher levels of T cells, which play an important role in the body's immune response.

Avoid Smoking and Drink Less Alcohol

Smoking undermines the basic immune defenses and raises the risk of bronchitis and pneumonia while drinking alcohol impairs the immune system and increases vulnerability to lung infections.

Cold and Flu Prevention in the Workplace

There are simple steps you can take to prevent the spreading of a cold and flu in the workplace:

- Wash your hands for at least 15-20 seconds with soap several times a day, especially following contact with potentially contaminated surfaces. Contaminated surfaces include: hands after a handshake, door handles (including microwave or refrigerator), copier machines, another person's keyboard or phone, coffee pot handle, elevator buttons, counter tops, and shared books or other office materials.
- After washing hands, turn off the faucet with a paper towel.
- Use a paper towel to open the bathroom door.
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, mouth and nose as these are points of entry for viruses.



Flu Facts

- A study published in 2018 showed getting a flu shot lessened the risk of severe flu among adults and also reduced the severity of illness.
- People with the flu are most contagious in the first three to four days after their illness begins.
- 5-20% of the U.S. population immunize against the flu every year.
- During the 2017-2018 flu season, estimates indicate that more than 900,000 people were hospitalized related to the flu and more than 80,000 people died from the flu.
- There are four types of influenza viruses: A, B, C and D. Human influenza A and B viruses cause seasonal epidemics almost every winter in the United States. Influenza C infections generally cause a mild respiratory illness and are not thought to cause epidemics. Influenza D viruses primarily affect cattle and are not known to infect or cause human illness.

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