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Immune Boosting Foods

After the virulent winter of 2009, I did a lot of research into foods that naturally boost immunity. I am a strong supporter of “**Food as Medicine**” and believe that we can make a huge difference to our health by eating the right foods. Many foods have immune stimulating effects and it is easy to include them into your diet on a daily basis. Additionally, by eating organic and seasonally you can be assured that your diet will be super rich in essential vitamins and minerals.

Mushrooms - Some recent studies have also found that they may make white blood cells act more aggressively against foreign bacteria. The very best kinds of mushrooms are shiitake and maitake

Garlic - antibacterial, antiviral and antifungal and increases immune function. It's also a good source of selenium, an important trace element, and sulfur, which is important for healthy liver function.

Onions - also a good source of sulfur and contain the same properties as garlic *Cruciferous vegetables* - broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, are good sources of beta-carotene and help protect against free-radical damage. They also contain vitamin C and calcium.

Spinach and other leafy greens - contain beta carotene, the precursor to vitamin A, vitamin C and calcium.

Orange vegetables - sweet potatoes, carrots, pumpkin and squash are a good source of vitamin A

Raisins, kiwi fruit, blueberries and oranges - good sources of vitamin C. To increase the amount of vitamin C from your oranges, thinly peel the skin off with a knife, leaving the white bioflavonoid rich inner peel.

Chinese cabbage - is a good source of vitamin A

Avocados - are rich in vitamin A and potassium and also contain folic acid and magnesium.

Ginger - helps the body fight off infection and has traditionally been used in treating colds and flu

Turmeric - enhances the immune system and has a detoxifying effect

Horseradish contains oils that have demonstrated antibiotic properties and has been effective against infections

Blueberries - the ultimate immune-boosting food. Rich in anti-oxidants. When US researchers measured the levels of antioxidants in 40 different fruits and vegetables, blueberries came out near the top. In fact, a 125 g serving of fresh blueberries supplies enough antioxidants to almost double our average daily intake

Beetroot - bursting with minerals and has anti-cancer, anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant, immune-boosting and detoxifying properties.

Brazil nuts - you only need to eat two or three a day to benefit from their great combination of immune-boosting nutrients: vitamin E, selenium and B vitamins.

Grapefruit - has immune-boosting, antiseptic, wound-healing and anti-bacterial properties.

Cranberries - best known for helping to prevent and treat urinary tract infections, especially cystitis, in women. They have both anti-fungal and antiviral properties.

Green tea - is a rich source of a type of antioxidant called a catechin, and preliminary research has found that a specific catechin -- epigallocatechin gallate (egcg) -- may give the beverage antigen-fighting abilities. When researchers at the University of Sherbrooke in Canada added green tea to lab samples of the adenovirus (one of many viruses that causes colds), they discovered that egcg inhibited the virus' ability to replicate. Similarly, researchers in South Korea found that egcg can also stop the influenza virus from replicating.

Yogurt - might help keep infections at bay. That's because these foods contain probiotics, bacteria that stimulate immunity cells in the gastrointestinal tract. Normal, healthy bacteria that colonize the



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GI tract help you resist bad bacteria and detoxify harmful substances. In addition to their protective effect in the GI tract, probiotics also may help stimulate immune-cell production system-wide. In a recent study of 33 women from the University of Vienna, Austria, those who ate ordinary yogurt daily for two weeks raised their T-lymphocyte cell count by nearly 30 percent.

Physical activity from 30 minutes a day to 60 to burn more calories," Fernandes says. In a yearlong study of 550 men and women, researchers from the University of South Carolina found those who exercised moderately were 25 percent less likely to develop a cold compared with those who rarely exercised. (The subjects simply walked at a brisk pace.) As with diet, moderation is critical; too much exercise or exercising to the point of exhaustion can boost the body's production of adrenaline and cortisol, two hormones that temporarily suppress immune function.

Factors that harm your Immune system

Overdosing on sugar - eating or drinking 100 grams (8 tbsp.) of sugar, the equivalent of about two cans of soda, can reduce the ability of white blood cells to kill germs by forty percent. The immune-suppressing effect of sugar starts less than thirty minutes after ingestion and may last for five hours. In contrast, the ingestion of complex carbohydrates, or starches, has no effect on the immune system.

Excess alcohol - excessive alcohol intake can harm the body's immune system in two ways. First, it produces an overall nutritional deficiency, depriving the body of valuable immune-boosting nutrients. Second, alcohol, like sugar, consumed in excess can reduce the ability of white cells to kill germs. High doses of alcohol suppress the ability of the white blood cells to multiply, inhibit the action of killer white cells on cancer cells, and lessen the ability of macrophages to produce tumor necrosis factors. One drink (the equivalent of 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1 ounces of hard liquor) does not appear to bother the immune system, but three or more drinks do. Damage to the immune system increases in proportion to the quantity of alcohol consumed. Amounts of alcohol that are enough to cause intoxication are also enough to suppress immunity.

Food allergens - due to a genetic quirk, some divisions of the immune army recognize an otherwise harmless substance (such as milk) as a foreign invader and attack it, causing an allergic reaction. Before the battle, the intestinal lining was like a wall impenetrable to foreign invaders. After many encounters with food allergens, the wall is damaged, enabling invaders and other potentially toxic substances in the food to get into the bloodstream and make the body feel miserable. This condition is known as the *leaky gut syndrome*.

Too much fat - obesity can lead to a depressed immune system. It can affect the ability of white blood cells to multiply, produce antibodies, and rush to the site of an infection.