



10 ways to boost your immune system and stay well

Your immune system is the most powerful weapon you have against disease. Strong immunity means that the body is better able to fight off viruses and germs.

1. Eat real food

Focus on eating natural, unrefined, unprocessed food as much as you can and cut out (or at least cut back on) sugar. That means focussing on eating meat, fish, eggs and vegetarian sources of protein like tofu, beans, lentils and chickpeas, and nuts and seeds, plus a broad range of fruit and vegetables. Follow the 80/20 rule (for the avoidance of doubt, this means eating healthily 80% of the time – think fresh apples rather than apple juice, or wholegrain bread instead of a white).

2. Enjoy 'happy tummy' foods

Did you know that up to 80% of your immunity to germs and disease is in your digestive system? The mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue (MALT) in the gut is part of the first line of immune defence, so getting the right balance between beneficial or 'good' gut bacteria and the 'bad' or potentially pathogenic bacteria is key. How to do this: The gut environment takes a beating year after year, owing to poor diets, too much sugar, stress, antibiotics and other factors. Even if you have no obvious tummy troubles, digestive health is vital, so it's worth the extra effort to take care of it. Add probiotic and prebiotic foods to your diet, as these re-populate the gut with good bacteria and feed them well enough to crowd out bad bacteria.

Here are some gut-friendly choices to get you started:

- Organic, probiotic, natural yoghurt – sometimes called 'live' yoghurt. Always buy full-fat yoghurt, as the 0% or no-fat options have increased levels of milk sugars – and fat isn't the enemy, either in life or in weight loss.
- Miso soup or miso bouillon paste (add these to soups and stews).
- Oats (soak first, as you would to make overnight oats, in order to release the goodness).
- Onions, garlic and Jerusalem artichokes. Green Bananas. Beans. Cooked, then cooled, potatoes.

3. Serve the chicken soup/ bone broth

Did you hear that chicken soup is great when you're unwell? If you thought it was just an old wives' tale, you'd be wrong. Research suggests that a bowl of chicken and vegetable soup can slow the speed at which neutrophils move around your body. Neutrophils are a type of white blood cell and part of the immune system, protecting your body from infection. When the neutrophils move slowly, there's a greater chance of them becoming more concentrated in the areas of your body that need the most healing. Studies have shown chicken soup to be particularly helpful in reducing symptoms in upper respiratory system infections



Gelatine is the most abundant protein in bone broth. Once in the digestive tract, gelatine is able to bind with water to support the healthy transit of food through the intestines. Emerging research suggests gelatine, alongside other amino acids found in bone broth, may have a therapeutic healing potential.

Chicken Soup Recipes

<https://www.feastingathome.com/chicken-soup/>

<https://www.countryliving.com/food-drinks/g980/chicken-soup-recipes/>

Bone Broth Recipe

- 2-3 pounds chicken, turkey, pork, beef, lamb, or other bones (try to get bones that have lots of connective tissue—feet, knuckles, necks, backs, etc.)
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 4 cups roughly chopped carrots, onions, and celery (or scraps)
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon peppercorns
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- Filtered water

In a large soup pan, place the bones, apple cider vinegar, carrots, onions, celery, bay leaves, peppercorns, and salt.

Fill pot with filtered water until it covers the bones by about an inch. Let mixture rest for 30 minutes.

Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat, then reduce heat to as low as your stove will go. You want it to just be barely bubbling. Cover with the lid slightly ajar and cook for 24 hours for poultry bones and 48 hours for red meat bones. If cooking overnight on the stove makes you nervous, you can place the whole pot (covered) in the fridge overnight, and restart the cooking time in the morning.

When cooking time is up, strain through a fine mesh sieve, and transfer to jars for storing in the fridge or freezer.

Once chilled, the broth should be jiggly and have a layer of fat on top. Scrape off the fat and use it for other purposes, if desired.



4. Cook with herbs & spices

Adding flavour to food is a smart way to include delicious immune boosters on your plate. Garlic is a potent superfood. It is antimicrobial, thanks to the active ingredient allicin, which helps fight viruses, and has been used for thousands of years to boost the immune system and prevent sickness. To make the most of allicin, crush, chop or grate the garlic cloves and allow them to sit for a few minutes. This releases more allicin. Once formed, it is fairly resistant to heat. Most culinary herbs contain anti-inflammatory properties due to their phytonutrients, but oregano and thyme are particularly rich. Spice up your cooking with turmeric and ginger, too, as these are well documented immune boosters.

5. Say no to sugar

Even if you don't consider yourself a sugar addict, it's worth taking a look at how much you do consume – and trying to swap sugary treats for something more wholesome. Sugar fans the flames of inflammation and affects the ability of white blood cells to fend off viruses and bacteria. In fact, the immune system stays depressed for hours after consuming sugar, according to recent studies. Enjoy raw cocoa or cacao hot chocolate on chilly evenings, adding your favourite milk or milk substitutes (with a little xylitol or stevia to sweeten, if you like). If you really miss that chocolate hit, try a few squares of pure, dark chocolate like Green & Blacks or any good chocolate with a higher cocoa content (at least 75%).

6. Drink more water

Staying well-hydrated is important for health in general. When it comes to bolstering your defences, water is a miracle worker. It flushes germs from your system, helps your blood to carry plenty of oxygen to your body's cells and allows those cells to absorb important nutrients. Invest in a filter jug or bottle to avoid quaffing high levels of chlorine and fluorine along with your tap water

7. Consider herbal tea

Green tea (and chamomile tea, if you're interested) can help supercharge your immunity. That's because they contain antioxidants that help battle free radicals that wreak havoc across the immune system. In truth, we don't know how large the effect really is on the immune system but, let's say the effect is there but minimal, every little helps

8. Hello sunshine!

As difficult as this is to achieve sometimes (particularly in winter and spring), spending sufficient time in sunlight is a vital immune booster. Vitamin D is made by your skin absorbing sunlight, so planning an hour or two outside during daylight hours is a good reason to leave work early or take your children to the park when you'd rather sleep late. Even sitting outside while you have your morning cuppa is a good thing right now. Expose as much of your bare skin to the sun as possible, and don't wear sunscreen during that time either as it inhibits the process. You can boost your vitamin D levels by eating more of the following foods: oily fish (salmon, mackerel and fresh tuna),



beef liver, mushrooms, cheese, egg yolks and vitamin D-fortified foods, such as dairy products and orange juice

9. Get enough sleep

Being tired is not good for your health. Simply, your body needs rest to stay healthy. In one study done at a private research university in Pennsylvania in the US found that, even if people said they felt fine and dandy, if they'd had less than 7 hours of sleep a night, they were three times more likely to catch a cold than people who had had an average of 8 hours or more of the ole shut-eye

10. Move in a way that feels good

Your lymphatic system, a parallel universe to your bloodstream, contains a network of tissues and organs that help your body get rid of toxins and waste. Its main role is to transport a fluid called lymph around the body, which contains infection-fighting white blood cells. Unlike the blood, which moves around thanks to your heart pumping, there's no automatic way of moving lymph about. The only way to shift the stuff from A to B is by moving yourself. A recent study from a university in North Carolina in the US showed that people who move themselves for 5 or more days a week experience 43% fewer days with upper respiratory infections (that's throat, sinuses and or lungs – basically the common cold). The aim is 30-60 minutes of exercise 5 times a week.

Stay Well!