



# 10 tips to boost your immune system

## Eat Your Vitamins

Some nutrients and foods that researchers believe may enhance the immune system are readily available in a variety of healthful foods. Try adding these immune-boosting items to your daily meals:

- Vitamin C-rich foods, like citrus fruit and broccoli
- Vitamin E-rich foods, like nuts and whole grains
- Garlic
- Zinc-rich foods, like beans, turkey, crab, oysters, and beef
- Bioflavonoids, which are found in fruits and vegetables
- Selenium-rich foods, like chicken, whole grains, tuna, eggs, sunflower seeds, and brown rice
- Carotenoid-rich foods, like carrots and yams
- Omega-3 fatty acids, found in nuts, salmon, tuna, mackerel, flaxseed oil and hempseed oil

## Manage Stress

According to the National Institutes of Health, hormones (like cortisol) that hang around during chronic stress can put us at risk for obesity, heart disease, cancer, and a variety of other illnesses. Take time out of your day to do a relaxing activity you enjoy, like journaling, meditating, going for a jog, or talking to a friend on the phone. Return refreshed and kick your stressors to the curb!

## Drink in Moderation

A 1998 article in the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* states that alcohol abuse can also cause lead to immunodeficiency, making you more susceptible to bacterial pneumonia, tuberculosis, and other communicable diseases. But the moderate use of alcohol (one drink daily for women, and two for men) has not been associated with negative effects on the immune system. So for the time being, the advice remains: everything in moderation.

## Work Out Regularly

Studies have shown that engaging in 35-45 minutes of brisk walking, five days a week over time can reduce the number of sick days. A consistent fitness program may be your ticket to better health!

## Drink Your Water

Water helps to cleanse the body and remove toxins, including germs. By keeping body systems, especially the respiratory system, well hydrated, you can enhance your virus-fighting potential. Aim for your 8 cups a day to help fend off germs.

## Sleep

According to authors of a sleep study published in 2001 in the journal *Seminars in Clinical Neuropsychiatry*, just a few days of sleep deprivation can be detrimental to one's immune system. The average adult should be getting 7 to 8 hours of sleep per night, although some people need as few as 5 hours, while some need as many as 10 hours. Make sure you avoid caffeine and other stimulants before going to bed to ensure that you will be well rested.

## Eat Your Vegetables

When you eat vegetables from the brassica family, which includes broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, and cabbage, they produce a chemical that can stop the growth of cancer cells and boost your immune system. Choose a variety of veggies, including broccoli, to meet your daily quota.

## Quit Smoking

Smoking and using tobacco products contributes to a host of health problems, and this is one more you can add to your list for reasons to quit.

## Lose Weight

Research has shown that obesity prevents the immune system from functioning properly, increasing its vulnerability to infection. To find out how many calories you need to maintain or lose weight, refer to your customized Nutrition Tracker.

## Exercise Moderately

When you're exercising, intensity matters. Your workouts don't have to be strenuous to provide immune-enhancing benefits. A study published in *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* found that upper respiratory infections were more common among athletes during heavy training. Whatever you do, listen to your body. If you're under the weather already, take it easy until you feel better.