

Illness Prevention

Ways to strengthen the immune system

The immune system protects the body by helping it to ward-off and recover from various diseases. While stress reduction and regular exercise are known to assist in strengthening the immune system, the types of food consumed make the largest contribution to a healthy immune system. Eating a well-balanced diet including a variety of healthful foods will boost this system's effectiveness like nothing else.

The chief destructive force that the immune system has to contend with is free radicals. Free radicals damage healthy cells by causing cell alterations (mutations) which can lead to serious illnesses such as heart disease and cancer. However, certain substances present in food can destroy free radicals. These substances are called antioxidants.

One of the strongest antioxidants is vitamin C, which boosts the immune system to aggressively react on cancer cells. Diets high in this nutrient are linked to reduced risks for stomach, breast, colorectal and prostate cancers. Good sources of vitamin C are citrus fruits, green peppers, cantaloupes and broccoli. Those who use tobacco products should eat even more foods containing vitamin C or take supplements since smoking depletes vitamin C reserves quicker than others.

Another important antioxidant is vitamin E. This nutrient helps to slow down the symptoms of aging and strengthen body cells that fight infection. People who eat foods rich in vitamin E or take supplements have an added weapon against bacteria and viruses. Vitamin E also helps in the fight against heart disease and cancer. Good food sources are whole grain foods and vegetable oils. Supplements are recommended to reach the daily requirement of this vitamin. Check with your doctor on the dose.

Carotenoids are antioxidants that help to strengthen the immune system by producing lymphocytes. Lymphocytes are cells important to fighting infection. The best sources for carotenoids are the red, yellow and orange fruits and vegetables such as carrots, tomatoes, cantaloupes, pumpkin, etc. and leafy green foods. The four important carotenoids are beta-carotene, lycopene, lutein and zeaxanthin. All of these provide excellent protection against disease.

The immune system gains strength from minerals to synthesize proteins which make up all the cells of the body. Important minerals include:

- Zinc, which increases the number of lymphocytes to fight cancers. Dietary sources of zinc are whole grains and cooked oysters.
- Iron, which fights infection and strengthens overall immunity. However, too much iron can be harmful and a physician should be consulted before starting a program of using iron supplements. Meats, dried beans and tofu are good sources of iron.
- Selenium, which helps to increase the number of antibodies and encourages growth of immune cells. This mineral can cause damage if too much is ingested so supplements are not recommended. Food sources are fish, grains and nuts.

A low fat diet is very important for a strong immune system. Excess fat hampers the ability of the body to fight off bacteria and free radicals. Lowering fat in the diet can be accomplished by limiting the intake of fatty foods and making low fat and low calorie meal substitutions.

Source: http://www.essortment.com/all/immunesystemst_rzzb.htm



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Immune Boosting Foods

Source: askmen.com

Apples

An apple a day can definitely keep the doctor away. An extremely popular, practical and tasty fruit, apples have some medicinal properties to boot. They contain vitamins A and C, boron and other goodies, which make them effective at lowering cholesterol levels and the risk of cancer.

They also have some anti-bacterial and anti-viral qualities. In addition, studies show that the smell of green apples reduces appetite. Certain alternative medicines use the scent of green apples to induce weight-loss.



An apple a day keeps the doctor away.



Broccoli

Many don't know that a single serving of broccoli contains 97% of our daily vitamin C intake, which is what makes it a great medicinal food for heart problems. Antioxidants maintain normal blood flow and lower blood pressure. Its fiber lowers cholesterol and chromium regulates blood sugar levels, making it a great food for diabetics. In proper amounts, this amazing food can avert ulcers, and guards against cataracts. Broccoli is also believed to prevent colon, lung and breast cancer because of how it affects hormone levels.

Oranges

You all know that because of their vitamin C levels, these sun fruits ward off nasty colds and flu, but did you know that oranges also help prevent lung, stomach, pancreatic, colon and breast cancer? On top of that, they also contain potassium and vitamin B, which prevent strokes and heart disease. One or two oranges a day is all it takes to benefit from this wonder-fruit's healing properties. Because oranges are so common and easy to consume—whether solid or in juice form—their healing properties are that much more effective.



Have you had your cutie today?



Carrots

Carrots are a potent medicinal food because of their beta-carotene content. Beta-carotene is linked with fighting cancer, strengthening the immune system and protecting arteries. One carrot a day can cut lung cancer risk in half and the belief that carrots are good for the eyes is well-founded: beta-carotene prevents eye diseases, such as cataracts. They also have a soothing effect on the stomach, reducing constipation and diarrhea. Furthermore, according to **The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition**, carrots cleanse the body by flushing out heavy metals from its tissues. This protects us from developing health problems in the future.

Garlic

Garlic is the best medicinal food of them all. So what can it do? The question is, what **can't** it do? According to the **National Cancer Institute**, garlic is one of the best cancer fighters around. Every year, scientists find new cancer-fighting compounds in garlic, so there are too many to list.

Garlic works best when eaten raw or aged. It fights off bacteria, fungus, infections, and viruses. Most folk medicines claim it can treat just about any small ailment, but even if it probably can't cure everything, its medicinal effects have been effective enough to find their way into the annals of many cultures' traditional medicines. Historically, because of its iodine content, garlic was used as a natural antibiotic like penicillin, until 1928, when the latter was discovered.

In the case of heart problems, one to two cloves a day are enough to lower the risk of heart attacks by half. Garlic also stimulates the immune system, helps the body get rid of toxins, lowers cholesterol and blood pressure, prevents blood clots, and has diuretic, anti-inflammatory and decongestant properties. Unfortunately, because of its potency, too much garlic can cause bloating, fever and diarrhea.



Every year scientist find new cancer fighting compounds in garlic.

This list of immune boosting foods could go on forever. So....Eat up and stay healthy.