



SEVENTH-DAY
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WELLNESS TIPS TO BOOST IMMUNITY

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In light of the COVID-19 Coronavirus outbreak, boosting immunity is key to building resilience against this disease, along with hygiene practices such as effective handwashing, and maintaining social etiquette when coughing and sneezing.

However, lifestyle practices also play a significant part. Did you know that how we eat, move, rest and manage stress, all have an impact on our immunity?

Research demonstrates the efficacy of eating well, maintaining regular exercise, adequate rest and effective stress management, all influence our ability to resist bacteria and viruses, especially in the winter months when colds and flu are more common.

Let's take a moment to examine these segments briefly.

Eat well

Sara Stanner Science Director of the Nutrition Society*¹ highlights the importance of a nutritious diet. She states:

"A lack of nutrients including protein, zinc, selenium, copper, iron and vitamins (A, C, E, D and the B vitamins) will impact on immune function so the best way to protect yourself is to eat a wide variety of foods..." she points out the following:

"Nutrients with potential immune-boosting properties include vitamin A (e.g. orange fruit and vegetables such as carrots and apricots), vitamin E (nuts, grains, vegetable oils and wheatgerm) and selenium (in brazil nuts).

What happens though, when you eat well and you still succumb to colds, flus and viruses? You may decide to take a trip to the chemist to find a remedy. However, is the pharmaceutical industry always the best option?

An online article by the Independent Community Pharmacist*² captioned: 'Brands warm up for winter' - states:

"The cold and flu category is now valued at a hearty £142.5 million, benefiting from a 19 per cent year-on-year increase"

Along with the expense, comes the concerns about some of the ingredients in the medicaments. However, one herbalist has some suggestions for natural remedies that can help with some of the common cold and flu symptoms. Betzy Bancroft*3 suggests the following, highlighting their use:

- **Echinacea** - may help support the immune system to fight colds
- **Elderberry** - helpful for seasonal flus
- **Elderflower** – can induce sweating, which may help reduce fever
- **Eucalyptus** - Antibacterial and expectorant properties, can loosen congestion for easier breathing
- **Golden seal** - can help with bacterial infections
- **Ginger** - can help ease congestion and warm the body. Its anti-inflammatory properties works as a sore throat remedy
- **Liquorice** - immune-boosting and throat-soothing properties. (Avoid if hypertensive)
- **Sage** - can help to ease sore throats and dry up mucus in sinuses.
- **Slippery elm** - A sore-throat soother high in "mucilage," a substance that coats the throat and helps relieve coughs.
- **Thyme** – Contains antibacterial compounds

As usual, we advise that you speak with your doctor before trying any new remedies (including herbs) especially if your symptoms are severe. This is particularly important if you are on medication or if you have a chronic health condition.

For more information on keeping well in winter visit NHS Choices at:

<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/winterhealth/Pages/Winterhealthhome.aspx>

Move more

Amongst the reasons NHS Choices *4 gives for keeping active are:

- Some research suggests that moderate exercise can strengthen the immune system thereby reducing the risk of coughs and colds
- Regular exercise will make you feel more energetic which should make it a little easier to get out of your warm bed on cold, dark mornings

Stress & sleep factors

Psychologists working in the field of "psychoneuroimmunology", have revealed that our state of mind affects our state of health. (<https://www.apa.org/research/action/immune>)

In other studies, adequate sleep is shown to enhance the efficacy of the immune system and its function to maintain wellbeing. (<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/324432>)

Particularly in the colder months, adequate sleep and effective stress management are key to maintaining a robust immune system. Professor Eccles director of the Common Cold and Nasal Centre*5 states – “our immune systems are weaker at this time of year, and stress and poor sleeping are factors too.” These further weaken immunity increasing susceptibility to infections.

Hygiene

Professor Eccles raises the importance of general hygiene and ensuring that hands are well washed particularly after visiting public places. He points out:

“Tears from the eye drain via a duct into the nasal cavity and when we touch our eyes with contaminated fingers we pass viruses into the nose.”

Vitamin D supplementation

What about vitamin supplementation? Is there evidence for any specific vitamin which assists in building our immunity?

Commenting on the necessity of supplements, Dr Eccles states:

“I also take Vitamin D3 as a supplement as it’s known as the sunshine vitamin, something which is usually more lacking in the winter months, when colds are reaching their peaks. He adds: “It can give the immune system a much-needed boost during winter when reserves may be low and there is sufficient information to indicate that vitamin D is a vital vitamin for the immune system.”

Thinking through these wellbeing tips to boost immunity, I have realised that when I follow through on a consistent basis the principles outlined above, my health certainly benefits. I wish the same for you too.

Good health!

*1 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/9589437/Life-Coach-Prepare-your-body-for-winter.html>

*2 <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/features/how-to-treat-a-cold-without-drugs-2122568.html>

*3 <http://www.wholeliving.com/136113/15-natural-remedies-winter-season>

*4 <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/Winterexercise.aspx>

*5 <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/professor-ron-eccles-gives-tips-2023202?pageNumber=2>