

6 Steps to Strengthen Your Immune System

Following these six steps keep Your immune system functioning at its peak performance, so you can stay healthy:

1- Eat Right

Eat the right foods when you feel hungry. Avoid eating too much, which can lead to weight gain and harm the immune system. Obesity prevents the immune system from functioning properly, increasing its vulnerability to infection. Some nutrients and foods that have been found to enhance the immune system include:

- 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.
 - Vegetables from the brassica family, like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, and cabbage.
- These vegetables when eaten produced a chemical that can stop the growth of cancer cells and boost the production of certain components of the immune system.

2- Exercise Regularly

3- Get Enough Sleep

Deep sleep stimulates and energizes the immune system, while sleep deprivation has the opposite effect. The average adult needs between 7 and 8 hours a night. To make sure you are getting enough quality sleep, avoid caffeinated drinks, decongestants, tobacco and alcohol.

4- Manage Stress.

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. These stress hormones can work in two ways, either switching off disease-fighting white blood cells or triggering a hyperactive immune system, which increases your risk of developing auto-immune diseases. So find ways to de-stress a few times per week, whether you exercise, practice yoga, meditate, or take a relaxing bath.

5- Quit Smoking

6- Consume Alcohol in Moderation

Moderate consumption of polyphenol-rich alcoholic beverages, like wine or beer seems to have a beneficial impact on the immune system compared to alcohol abuse or abstinence.

Reference:

Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry,

2007 article in the *British Journal of Nutrition*

www.sparkpeople.com/resource/wellness_articles.