

How To Boost your Immune System Naturally

Tired of feeling under the weather and constantly getting sick? The busy summer season is upon us and many local business owners, tourism industry workers, and other seasonal workers are becoming sick due to increased stress levels and heavy work loads. If you are a person who has suffered from a cold or flu this season or who is on the edge of burn out, there are many natural ways to prevent illness and to support your body to prevent sickness and to recover faster without the need of prescription drugs and antibiotics.

One of the best ways to prevent yourself from getting sick is to get proper nutrition and avoid foods that suppress your immune system. Foods such as sugar, coffee, alcohol, and refined carbohydrates (bread, pasta, and pastries) all have a negative effect on your immune system. They make your body work harder and weaken the body's natural defense mechanism. It is important to consume foods with a greater nutritional value including raw or lightly steamed vegetables, fresh fruit, low fat protein (beans, fish, chicken), and whole grains (millet, quinoa, brown rice, oatmeal, spelt, kamut), as they support the immune system, balance blood sugar levels, and facilitate the digestive system. It is also important to drink plenty of fluids. Drinking at least eight glasses of water a day is important since viruses and bacteria have a harder time surviving in moist environments. But, avoid fruit juices packed with sugars and food preservatives, since these will actually lower your immune response.

It is also important to avoid any potential food sensitivities, since these can deplete the immune response. The most common food sensitivities are wheat, dairy, peanuts, citrus, eggs, soy, and corn. Elimination diets and specific blood tests can help determine your food sensitivities. The gut contains over 50% of your immune cells (Peyer's patches) so keeping the gut healthy is important. Supplementing with probiotics (acidophilus) helps balance the bacteria in the intestine to prevent colonization of harmful bacteria. Probiotics in the intestines helps promote activity of white blood cells and increases antibody production, strengthening the immune response.

To prevent illness during times of stress it is crucial to supplement the body with immune enhancing vitamins and minerals such as Vitamin A,C,E, zinc and selenium. These vitamins are effective at increasing immunity and are also known as "antioxidants" which protect healthy cells in the body by fighting off free radicals (substances that damage cells and promote disease). Herbs such as Echinacea, Astragalus, Goldenseal, Borage, Wild Indigo, Reishi mushroom, and Garlic are beneficial at stimulating the immune system and have anti-bacterial and anti-viral activity.

In addition to supporting the immune system, it is also very important to enhance the adrenal glands, which are involved in controlling stress and preventing exhaustion. When your body becomes physically and emotionally stressed, you are more prone to sickness as your resistance is lowered. Supplementing with B vitamins and adrenal herbs such as Licorice and Ginseng, can increase your resistance to stress and infection, and increase your overall energy.

Dr. Jeannie Doig, HBS, ND
Naturopathic Physician

www.drjeannedoig.com
Port Alberni (250) 723-9888
Tofino & Ucluelet (250) 522-0033

Lastly, it is crucial to get adequate exercise and rest. Going to bed early (before 11pm) gives your body a chance to recuperate and heal. Take time out for yourself each day to calm your mind with meditation, deep breathing techniques, yoga, and journaling. Acupuncture is also an effective way to reduce stress levels and improve immune function.

Naturopathic Medicine treats the “whole” person using natural therapies, such as diet, supplements, herbs, homeopathy, and acupuncture to support and encourage the body to heal itself.